Joshua Holo

Byzantine Jewry in the Mediterranean Economy

Cambridge

BYZANTINE JEWRY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN ECONOMY

Using primary sources, Joshua Holo uncovers the day-to-day workings of the Byzantine Jewish economy in the Middle Byzantine period. Built on a web of exchange systems both exclusive to the Jewish community and integrated in society at large, this economy forces a revision of Jewish history in the region.

Paradoxically, the two distinct economic orientations, inward and outward, simultaneously advanced both the integration of the Jews into the larger Byzantine economy and their segregation as a self-contained economic body. Dr. Holo finds that the Jews routinely leveraged their internal, even exclusive, systems of law and culture to break into – occasionally to dominate – Byzantine markets. Through this, they challenge our concept of Diaspora life as a balance between the two competing impulses of integration and segregation. The success of this enterprise, furthermore, qualifies the prevailing claim of Jewish economic decline during the Commercial Revolution.

JOSHUA HOLO is Associate Professor of Jewish History, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion.

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JOSHUA HOLO

Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion
Los Angeles, California

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521856331

First published 2009

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-85633-1 Hardback

Para Andréa,
Meu Algo Assim

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Acknowledgments

This work took shape under the tutelage of scholars and teachers who have left their permanent imprint on my scholarly life and to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude. It began as my doctoral dissertation under the direction of Norman Golb, my graduate advisor, whose vast erudition, rigor, dedication and advocacy I can only hope to emulate in my own professional life. Also in the capacity of reader, Walter Kaegi generously lent his time, energy and knowledge to the development of this work, with invaluable insights and orientation into Byzantine history and essential criticism at every stage of writing. Joel Kraemer lent his critical eye, together with his Hebraic and Hellenic expertise, as well as his constant support and encouragement. Nicholas de Lange, to whom the field of Byzantine-Jewish studies owes so much, provided collegial and professional orientation indispensable to the production of this volume, and Steven Bowman, also a central figure in the study of Byzantine Jewry, offered generous and punctilious criticism on which I have heavily relied. Most of all, I wish to acknowledge my wife, Andréa Martins, who not only encouraged me through this project and the years of study that preceded it, but who has also conferred value on it by purposefully and generously lending her energies to our shared life, so that she might, in the fungible economy of the family, render my work possible.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to a number of institutions. The Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture each provided generous and necessary financial support. The Graduate Theological Union encouraged me in this and other pursuits, liberally defining its sense of mission to include me and my work within it. Subsequently, Dean Lewis Barth, with this and allied work in mind, brought me on board at the Los Angeles campus of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and I am privileged to pursue my work at this venerable institution of Jewish learning. I also want to thank Michael Sharp of Cambridge University Press for his consummate professionalism,

patience and expertise in ushering this manuscript to its present form. Though oft repeated, it is anything but formulaic for me to point out that, while I owe any successes of this book to these people and institutions, the responsibility for any deficiencies lies at my feet alone.

JH
Los Angeles

Abbreviations

BE	*Book of the Eparch*: J. Nicole (ed. and trans.), *Le livre du préfet*. Geneva, 1893; repr. London, 1970
BF	*Byzantinische Forschungen*
BJGS	*Bulletin of Judaeo-Greek Studies*
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
BZ	*Bzantinische Zeitschrift*
CII	*Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum*. 2 vols. Vatican City, 1936
CJ	*Codex Justinianus*: A. Watson (ed. and trans.), *The Digest of Justinian*. Philadelphia, 1985
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSHB	Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae
CTh	*Codex Theodosianus*. T. Mommsen and P. Meyer (eds.). Berlin, 1905
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
EHB	*Economic History of Byzantium*, A. E. Laiou (ed.). Washington, D.C., 2002
ENA	Elkan Nathan Adler Collection, Jewish Theological Seminary
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
JBE	Starr, J. *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*. Athens, 1939
JESHO	*Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MGWJ	*Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*
PAAJR	*Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*
PG	Patrologia Graeca: J.-P. Migne (ed.). *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*: *Series Graeca*. Paris, 1856–66
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
REJ	*Revue des Études Juives*

CHAPTER 1

Byzantine-Jewish economic history

When Samuel Krauss first took up the subject of Byzantine-Jewish history, he claimed to do so "as one would an orphan"; and though it has grown somewhat since the publication of his seminal *Studien zur byzantinisch-jüdische Geschichte* in 1914, the field still remains at the margins of both Byzantine and Jewish history. The Jews did not play what one could fairly call a pivotal role in the fate of the Byzantine Empire, and what is more, time has left us with a relative dearth of primary sources as compared to other major Jewish communities of the Mediterranean and Europe. Furthermore, the Jews of Byzantium never figured, quantitatively, as a major part in the overall economy of the empire. Agriculture, the government and the army dominated the resources that determined wealth and its distribution, while the Jews were overwhelmingly urban and rigidly excluded from both military and civil service. But within the smaller economic sector of trade, the Jews did indeed loom disproportionately large, and through their prodigious activity in a few but significant industries, they demonstrably helped to shape Byzantine economic history. In addition, the study of Byzantine Jewry offers a unique vantage point from which to consider larger trends in economic history. The view of the medieval Mediterranean from the perspective of Byzantine-Jewish sources reveals otherwise ignored patterns of Jewish trade and communication, and it calls into question our standard ways of viewing Jewish interaction with society at large.

The chronological scope of the present study conforms to that which is conventionally called the Middle Byzantine period, from Heraclius (r. 610–41) to the end of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. In an effort to avoid relying reflexively on this standard periodization, a number of concrete metrics may be invoked to justify it. Concurrent with the rise of Islam, the beginning of the period under review represents a logical watershed in the history of the Mediterranean. Most notably for the Jews, the demographics of the Mediterranean shifted forever thereafter, with results not only in the

economic and political realms, but also in the internal development of Jewish law, languages, ritual and philosophy. Even within the relatively circumscribed experience of the Jews in the Byzantine state, the reign of Heraclius heralded a period of change at least as abrupt as that which accompanied the reign of Constantine I (sole r. 324–37). At the end-point of this period, the Fourth Crusade marks a shift of somewhat lesser moment than does the rise of Islam. It too, however, serves as a viable turning point, particularly in the Jews' role as subjects of the Byzantine state, which never truly recovered from the occupation of Constantinople by the Latins. Coincidentally, the richly informative documents of the Cairo Genizah span the period between the tenth and twelfth centuries, and are thus roughly coterminous with the end of the Middle Byzantine period. In deference to these considerations, the present study hews closely to the chronological limits of the Middle Byzantine period, only occasionally venturing to refer to events immediately beyond them.

THE JEWS OF BYZANTIUM

Since the chronological considerations follow almost universal convention, the more pressing questions pertain to the assumptions governing the study of specifically Byzantine-Jewish economic history. To begin with, the composite term "Byzantine-Jewish" suggests an experience that unfolded in relation to two very different points of reference.[1] In the Middle Ages, the Jewish religion was associated with the Jewish people and all its functions, and to separate them out is to distinguish where, frequently, there was no difference.[2] So, at the very outset, the term "Jewish economy" poses distinct problems of definition. The term assumes that a discrete group of people, typically defined by religious and ethnic criteria, also engaged in economic activity that lends itself to commensurately consistent and particular characterization. The concept of a "Jewish economy"

[1] See J. Haldon, "Everyday Life in Byzantium: Some Problems of Approach," *BMGS* 10 (1986): 54.

[2] On the one hand, C. Renfrew, "Trade as Action at a Distance: Questions of Integration and Communication," in *Ancient Civilization and Trade*, ed. J. A. Sabloff and C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (Albuquerque, 1975), 3, argues for an appreciation of the organic whole in this regard (though applied to ancient civilizations, not medieval ones). On the other hand, however, Renfrew also distinguishes, on p. 6, between the objects of trade, i.e., information and goods, and particularly associates the former with religious life. In the case of medieval Judaism, this distinction does not apply, most notably in relation to Hebrew books; see A. Grossman, "Communication among Jewish Centers during the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries," in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora*, ed. S. Menache (Leiden, 1996), 115.

is meaningless, then, unless that assumption is in fact warranted. Is there a "body Jewish," and can we discern reliable patterns of economic activities within that body?[3]

It turns out that the distinct and corporate nature of the Jews readily comes through in the primary sources. To be sure, ethnic, linguistic and ideological subdivisions abounded among the Jews, but that fact does not belie their ultimate cohesion under the umbrella term "Jewish." In fact, the minority Jews, in all their complexity, are easily identified in distinction from the majority Byzantines, even taking into account all the ethnic, religious and linguistic heterogeneity of Byzantine society at large. Jewish and Christian sources throughout Byzantine history uniformly recognize the Jews as a distinct group, mentioned explicitly as such – not only in religious polemics, but also in political conflicts and legal classifications. Even Christian Judaizing, which ostensibly threatened to blur the distinctions between the two religions, could not materially bridge the gap between the dominant Byzantine Orthodox society and the Jews, a distinct people with its own religion, calendar and institutions.[4] Moreover, the Jewish sense of corporate identity did not exist merely in contrast to the Christian one. The Jews, Byzantine and otherwise, shared internal defining qualities that mutually strengthened one another and that collectively bound the Jews as a coherent unit. Their common religion, Judaism, reinforced their common language, Hebrew, which provided a vehicle for their common social compact, Jewish law, which in turn governed those who were born into it in almost every aspect of their lives, from conjugal relations to any number of economic pursuits. For the Jews of the Middle Ages, this ethnic-religious self-understanding constantly reaffirmed itself and is ultimately axiomatic, be it in Byzantium or anywhere else.

To be a Jew was, therefore, to belong to an ethnic group in every possible sense, and the resultant cohesion expressed itself in economic terms

[3] B. Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens dans le monde occidental* (Paris, 1960), 12–13, comes to a similar conclusion; on the unity of the Jewish experience as a combination of national and religious historical destiny, for lack of a better word, see Z. Ankori, *Encounter in History: Jews and Christian Greeks in Their Relation through the Ages* (Heb.) (Tel-Aviv, 1984), 20–1.

[4] Various Judaizing heresies and even Iconoclasm all owed something to Judaism; at the same time, volumes were dedicated to the excoriation of the Jews and their religion. For example, the Quinisext Council tried to separate the Jewish Passover from the Christian Easter, precisely due to the commonality between the two. Later, Michael II, the iconoclastic emperor, was accused of being influenced by Jews. For sources, see J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire: 641–1204*, Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie 30 (Athens, 1939), 29–30, 89 no. 8, 98–99 no. 20.

throughout the Jewish world. Not surprisingly, then, one can indeed isolate a distinct set of financial relationships and economic activities concentrated in certain industries and serving particular needs. That this discrete set of relationships and activities might legitimately be called "Jewish" emerges from the fact that they either served uniquely Jewish functions, such as the redemption of Jewish captives, or that they discernibly occupied a disproportionate number of Jews who grouped themselves consciously within a given trade, such as the textile industry.

It should not surprise, therefore, that one can justifiably restrict the notion of a Jewish economy even further, by adding another qualifier, i.e., "Roman" or, reflecting our modern historiographical conventions, "Byzantine." Here again, the primary evidence provides firm grounding. Even in a world of shifting borders and heterogeneous populations, the quality of being Byzantine had concrete consequences. Juridically speaking, all the residents of the empire were subject to the tax structure and legislation of the polity, and this imperial governance guaranteed that the border was never merely imaginary. One of the most important Byzantine economic sources, the *Book of the Eparch*, is entirely devoted to the fiscal regulation of Constantinopolitan guilds. It mentions the Jews in a key section on the silk trade, putting strictures on their commerce that did not apply to Jews in Fatimid Egypt, for example. Culturally speaking, the Jews' affinity for the Greek language and the availability of longstanding relationships – both personal and business, since the two often overlapped – persisted even outside the boundaries of the state, so that one may speak of a Byzantine orientation in the direction and content of trade, evident in correspondence from the Cairo Genizah.[5] In capturing this web of relationships, the sources thereby point overwhelmingly to a demonstrably Byzantine-Jewish economy, with its own conditions, strengths, weaknesses, propensities and influences.

In addition to the social, political and economic situation that distinguished Byzantine Jewry from coreligionists throughout the Mediterranean, its linguistic and cultural engagement with Byzantine Christian society betrays a surprisingly thoroughgoing identification of the Jewish and the Hellenic or Roman. Nicholas de Lange, in a number of articles, has described these inclinations of Byzantine Jewry, painting a nuanced picture of deep

[5] Here, one might consider the appellation "Romaniote" to refer to the Jews of Byzantine culture. Though this term is accurate, insofar as it highlights the contemporary notion of *romanitas*, I have relied on the notion of "Byzantine" Jewry, not only for its ease of reference, but also because it recalls the relationship to the state, such as it was.

acculturation.[6] De Lange points to both ambiguity and ambivalence of identity, perhaps most eloquently expressed by sectarian Jewish leader Judah Hadassi, who charges that his mainstream Jewish adversaries, "the Rabbanites, in expressing themselves partly in the vernacular language [i.e., Greek] in their documents, behave like gentiles."[7] In chastising his opponents, Hadassi reveals the underlying Hellenism in Jewish society: Greek, in addition to being the quotidian language of Byzantine Jewry, also spilled over into the presumably Hebraic spheres of legal writing.[8] Hadassi therefore presents us with a startling reality (corroborated in other sources as well), namely, Hebrew distinguished the Jews from the Christians, but Greek simultaneously served as a Jewish language.[9] If anything, Byzantine Jewry actually favored Greek until the revival of Hebrew, which dates perhaps to the ninth century but which took hold during the period of the Genizah documents.[10] Even then, however, Greek remained alive in Jewish life, and its persistence fostered a cultural bilingualism, or diglossia, that differed from the well-known bilingualism of other Jewish populations in Christendom, such as those in Spanish-, Italian- and German-speaking Europe. The difference, de Lange points out, lies in the function of Byzantine Greek. It, alone among the Christian vernaculars, was "not only the spoken language of their Christian neighbors but also the language of their church and their written literature."[11] Much more ancient than the roughly analogous Judaization of Arabic, this religious diglossia resulted in a remarkable marriage. Greek Judaism and Greek Christianity, despite the gulf between them,

[6] N. R. M. de Lange, "Hebraism and Hellenism: the Case of Byzantine Jewry," *Poetics Today* 19/1 (1998): 129–45; de Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks or Romans? Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium," in *Strangers to Themselves: the Byzantine Outsider*, ed. D. Smythe (Aldershot and Burlington, 2000); de Lange, "Hebrew-Greek Genizah Fragments and their Bearing on the Culture of Byzantine Jewry," *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9, B1 (1986), 39–46. See also, D. Jacoby, "What Do We Learn about Byzantine Asia Minor from the Documents of the Cairo Genizah?" in *Byzantine Asia Minor (6th–12th cent.)* [Η βυζαντινή Μικρά Ασία], ed. Sp. Vryonis, Jr. and N. Oikonomides (Athens, 1998), 85–7.

[7] J. Hadassi, *Eshkol ha-kofer*, fol. 13a, as translated by de Lange, "Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium," 113.

[8] De Lange, "The Case of Byzantine Jewry," 138.

[9] Ibid., 136–8. For confirmation of the use of Greek, see the responsum of Hai Gaon in E. Harkavy, *Responsen der Geonim* (*Zikhron kamah ge'onim*), Studien und Mitteilungen (Zikaron la-rishonim) 4 (Berlin, 1887), 130. Hai b. Sherira (d. 1038), the preeminent Baghdadi legal authority, accepted the use of Greek in bills of divorce, which require consummate technical precision, because the Greek-speaking Jews (as well as the Roman and Persian Jews) could be trusted to maintain the necessary punctiliousness despite the language barrier.

[10] S. Simonsohn, "The Hebrew Revival among Early Medieval European Jews," in *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume*, 3 vols., ed. S. W. Baron, S. Lieberman and A. Hyman (New York and London, 1974), vol. II, 857–8.

[11] De Lange, "Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium," 115–16.

shared a religious language that doubled as the medium of day-to-day expression.[12]

Even the ambivalence, or downright inner conflict, of Jews towards their own Hellenism points to the intensity and authenticity of the connection between the two languages and the cultures. Well-worn expressions of resentment against Rome, the enforcer of Exile, routinely characterized Jewish vituperations against Greek language and culture. Esau, the eponymous ancestor of Rome according to Jewish lore, pitted himself against Israel in an apocalyptic struggle.[13] Additionally, "both nations relied on religion as a guardian of their national identity," resulting in parallel, mutually exclusive perspectives, which expanded the gap between them and which set the terms for much of their conflict.[14] At the same time, however, Byzantine Jewry does not so much negotiate with Roman culture as it does intimately comprise that culture as part and parcel of its Jewishness.[15] Roberto Bonfil perhaps puts it best when he describes the anonymous Byzantine author of a tenth-century, Hebrew apocalypse as one "who saw the two cultures as though organically integrated into one another."[16] In both its negative and positive aspects, therefore, the internalization of *graecitas* or *romanitas* as an expression of Byzantine Judaism illustrates how culture serves as a bridge of similarity and exchange, while it may just as easily and at the same time function as a barrier.

Unsurprisingly, a simultaneous push-and-pull characterized not only the Jewish side of the relationship, but also that of Byzantine society. To be sure, the Byzantine authorities acted on the assumption of an existential difference separating Judaism from Orthodox Christianity, and the state consistently attempted to regulate the degree of Jewish participation in society at large. It sought, in sum, to reduce the points of contact.[17] For

[12] One wonders how much of this is specific to the Byzantine Empire, often seen, from the point of view of toleration of the Jews, as a half-way point between Islam and Western Europe, as posited in all its nuance by M. R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross* (Princeton, 1994). On this topic, D. Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews* (New York, 2002), xxi: "On the one hand, the tendency to acculturate into the non-Jewish culture typically produced a distinctive Jewish subculture. On the other hand, the effort to maintain a separate identity was often achieved by borrowing and even subverting motifs from the surrounding culture. Language was one arena in which this complex process took place … Language was at once a sign of acculturation *and* cultural segregation."

[13] Ibid.; Ankori, *Encounter*, 144–5. [14] Ibid., 25, 36, 107.

[15] Alternatively, their Jewishness was an expression of the Hellenism, de Lange, "The Case of Byzantine Jewry," 130. Cf. I. G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood* (New Haven, 1996), 11.

[16] R. Bonfil, "The 'Vision of Daniel' as a Historical and Literary Document" (Heb.), *Yitzhak F. Baer Memorial Volume*, *Zion* 44 (1979), 147. S. Bowman, "From Hellenization to Graecization: the Byzantine-Jewish Synthesis," in *Jewish Assimilation, Acculturation and Accommodation*, ed. M. Mor (Lanham, Md.; Omaha, Nebr., 1992): 45–9.

[17] A. Kazhdan and A. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley, 1985), 185–7.

that reason, the Jews were not, in any modern sense, integrated; in Constantinople they lived in a separate quarter, they suffered legal limitations, and they underwent episodes of physical violence and forced baptism.[18] Religiously, the Jews furthermore functioned as a religious foil that helped formulate the Byzantine sense of self, especially insofar as that sense of self was, as Michael Angold avers, "most compellingly defined by negative means, by singling out enemies for vilification."[19] In the same vein, David Jacoby has compellingly outlined Orthodoxy's entrenched, well-articulated ecclesiastical-doctrinal hostility towards Judaism, which remains at the disposal of those inclined to invoke it, even to this day.[20]

Significantly, however, the efforts to separate the Jews from the life of the empire, at times half-hearted and at times sincere, do not seem to have borne much fruit. Jacoby can only consider it "contradictory … that there exists a local and quotidian dimension of coexistence, of socialization and economic cooperation among Jews and Christians," even if he hastens to point out its limits.[21] For one thing, despite their embodying religious distinctiveness, the Jews defied easy dismissal as aliens or foreigners, insofar as they met a very high standard of cultural integration in signal matters of language and autochthony.[22] In other words, in the day-to-day of urban life, points of segregation were too deeply interwoven with those of integration, and they could not be disentangled to reflect the comfortable distinctions that the Byzantine powers might have preferred. The position of the Jews in

[18] Attested into the late period, A. Berger, "Sightseeing in Constantinople: Arab Travellers, c. 900–1300," in *Travel in the Byzantine World*: *Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot, 2002), 189.

[19] M. Angold, *Byzantium: the Bridge from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (New York, 2001), 131; cf. Angold, "Byzantine 'Nationalism' and the Nicaean Empire," *BMGS* 1 (1975): 66.

[20] D. Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance: une communauté marginalisée," in *Oi perithoriakoi sto Byzantio, 9 May 1992*, ed. Ch. Maltezou (Athens, 1993), 103–15; Jacoby, "Les Juifs: protections, divisions, ségrégation," in *Constantinople, 1054–1261: tête de la chrétienté, proie des Latins, capitale grecque*, ed. A. Ducellier and M. Balard (Paris, 1966), 174. Due to the historical connection between Christianity and Judaism, the Church particularly feared Judaism as a source for Christian heresy, above and beyond any properly interreligious disputes between Synagogue and Church. This sense of Judaism as one of the fonts of heresy therefore exacerbated the sense of opposition. So, too, the particular fear of Jewish reprisals against converts to Christianity and an awareness that converts might be susceptible to guilt: P. Eleuteri and A. Rigo, *Eretici, dissidenti, musulmani ed Ebrei a Bisanzio* (Venice, 1993), 38, 43.

[21] Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," 146. As with many things, it is not merely a question of the fact that Jacoby points out the limitations of détente, but more pointedly that he perceives them as more prominent and more likely to govern the real-life relations of Jews in the empire, than am I.

[22] H. Ahrweiler, "Byzantine Conception of the Foreigner: the Case of the Nomads," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. H. Ahrweiler and A. E. Laiou (Washington, D.C., 1998), 1–16, discusses some of these qualities in addition to the applicability of *romaios* as a defining cultural sensibility.

comparison to that of other ethnicities in the Byzantine Empire further strengthens this impression. Even though a majority language and religion did dominate Byzantine culture and politics, they naturally evolved in relation to an array of minorities, including Turks, Slavs, Armenians and Arabs (all of whom, notably, belonged to larger communities outside the borders of the Byzantine polity).[23] In this mosaic the Jews, perhaps "more than any other ethnic group in the empire … embraced Hellenic culture and the Greek language," at least at the level of the common people.[24] Though it pushed the Jews to the margins, Byzantine society nevertheless allowed the possibility for the Jews also to cling, to a unique degree, to the dominant culture as an expression of their own minority identity.

Nothing more pithily captures the reciprocity of this ambivalence than does the *Life of Saint Nikon*, set roughly in the mid-to-late tenth century.[25] After Nikon's ideologically charged expulsion of the Jews from Sparta, John Aratos "asserted that the removal of the Jews outside the city was not just or reasonable."[26] Though Nikon won the day and expelled the Jews once and for all, Aratos' attitude and its economic motivation ("some task, by which garments are accustomed to be finished") provided a plausible defense against the all-too-full armory of anti-Jewish rantings.[27] We might, in view of this less-easily characterized reality, shift the emphasis of Angold's analysis, by making the oppositional figure of Byzantine religious identity the idea of the Jew, or perhaps that of Judaism, rather than a living Jewish neighbor or client.[28] Certainly, even this more abstract understanding of Judaism could result in horrible real-life consequences, but the reality that governed the lives of the Jews and their interactions with neighbors clearly

[23] D. Jacoby, "Les Juifs: protections, divisions, segregation," 171; D. Abulafia, "The Italian Other: Greeks, Muslims and Jews," in *Italy in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. D. Abulafia (Oxford, 2004), 215–16. Consider M. McCormick, "Byzantium on the Move," in *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot, 2002), 3–7.

[24] S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium: 1204–1453* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1985), 9; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 177–80. In contrast, H. Ahrweiler, "Citoyens et étrangers dans l'empire romain d'orient," in *La nozione di «romano» tra cittadinanza e l'universalità* (Naples, 1984), 346–8, who is inclined to see the Jews as "sous-byzantins" or internal foreigners. Ahrweiler nevertheless acknowledges a spectrum of membership in Byzantine society.

[25] Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 9–10; Ankori, *Encounter*, 120; D. Sullivan, ed. and trans., *The Life of Saint Nikon* (Brookline, Mass., 1987), 1.

[26] Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon*, 118–19; excerpted in Starr, *JBE*, 167.

[27] S. Bowman, "The Jewish Settlement in Sparta and Mistra," *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 22 (1977–84): 132; A. Harvey, *Economic Expansion in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1989), 218.

[28] Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," 115; M. Garidis, "La représentation des 'nations' dans la peinture post-byzantine," *Byzantion* 39 (1969): 90–1, who describes the artistic representation of Jews as the "twelve tribes of Israel and, by extension, all of sinful humanity or the unbelieving peoples."

conformed to the more nuanced intermingling of difference and identification.[29] Angeliki Laiou has characterized the simultaneity of the push and pull, in terms of the Jews' legal standing, as a tension "between an integrating state on the one hand, and on the other particular groups that … belong to a different type-set of jurisdiction."[30] Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis most recently summed up his conclusions from the cultural point of view, conceding that "if marginalization did occur – and fundamentally there is no reason to doubt it – it was nevertheless incomplete."[31]

In brief, even granting the centrality of religion in Byzantine identity, the relatively facile image of medieval Jewish–Christian religious rivalry simply does not account for the more complicated interplay between integration and segregation that the Jews experienced in the Byzantine Empire.[32] The operative consideration, then, is not whether a given factor united or divided the Jews and Christians of Byzantium, but rather how frequently the parties met at, and how intensively they dealt across, the given points that at once united and divided them. When conceptualizing the Byzantine-Jewish quality of the economy, this complicated and rich relationship distinguishes it from other Jewish communities in the Christian world, and it colors their experience as merchants and producers of goods.

ECONOMIC HISTORY AS APPLIED TO BYZANTINE JEWRY

Historians have intuited and documented the intensity of this Byzantine–Jewish relationship, including a concept of cultural and economic engagement – or entanglement – that approximates the concept of integration.[33]

[29] Echoing this reality is the official position of Demetrios Chomatenos of Ochrida, as per Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 221–2 and notes. Demetrios argues, in this responsum (not part of his *Ponemata Diaphora*, ed. G. Prinzing [Berlin and New York, 2002], 46–9) that the segregation of the Jews (as well that of Armenians and Muslims) rendered possible their presence in society, so that both personal and economic truck might result in conversion.

[30] A. E. Laiou, "Institutional Mechanisms of Integration," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. H. Ahrweiler and A. E. Laiou (Washington, D. C., 1998), 178.

[31] J. Niehoff-Panagiotidis, "Byzantinische Lebenswelt und rabbinische Hermeneutik: die griechischen Juden in der Kairoer Genizah," *Byzantion* 74/1 (2004): 129.

[32] Bonfil, "Una storiografia ebraica medievale?" in Bonfil, *Tra due mondi* (Naples, 1996), 214.

[33] De Lange, "Hebrew-Greek Genizah Fragments," 39–46; Z. Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium: the Formative Years, 970–1100* (New York, 1959), 193–200; Ankori, *Encounter*, 29–33, for the vigorous argument for Jewish integration in the urban economy of Byzantium; Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 9–10, 164–8. For a similar, if cursory, analysis, see G. Walter, *La vie quotidienne à Byzance* (Monaco, 1966), 154, who organizes the Jews with foreigners, but considers them "profondément imprégnés … de la culture grecque."

Roberto Bonfil, echoing Nicholas de Lange, aptly captures the Byzantine experience in his discussion of the Jews of Byzantine southern Italy. Bonfil perceives "a sort of synthesis between different aspirations and orientations, [which] include all the elements in which presence and absence, acceptance and rejection, intermingled in multifaceted fashion, as a function of the various degrees of attraction or repulsion" to the majority culture.[34] This opinion, moreover, represents something of a consensus among scholars of Byzantine Jewry. However, though they do not fail to cite important examples from the realm of economic history, none has proposed an economic model to articulate (or, for that matter, to challenge) this consensus, such as Jacob Katz proposed in *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* and such as S. D. Goitein detailed in *A Mediterranean Society*.[35] Economic history can therefore speak to the nature of Byzantine Judaism in way not yet fully plumbed. Indeed, economic history of Byzantine Jewry complements with particular clarity the acculturation and ambivalence described by de Lange and Bonfil.[36] It also points to a continuity and success in Jewish economic interests, which force us to reconsider prevailing assumptions of decline beginning in the tenth century.

A remarkable picture of Byzantine-Jewish economic organization comes naturally out of the sources, according to which the system might be likened to a cell within a larger organism. An internal economy fueled Jewish communal life, while that community, in its turn, played a well-documented and significant role in the wider commercial economies of Byzantium and the eastern Mediterranean region.[37] The distinction between the inwardly and outwardly oriented economic spheres jumps out from the assembled evidence and seems to represent underlying contemporary assumptions, but at the same time the external economy of the Byzantine Jews thoroughly depended on the apparently isolated one

[34] R. Bonfil, "Cultura ebraica e cultura cristiana in Italia meridionale," in *Tra due mondi*, 7. See also Bonfil, "Tra due mondi: prospettive di ricerca sulla storia culturale degli Ebrei dell'Italia meridionale nell'alto medioevo," in *Italia Judaica I: Atti del I Convegno Internazionale, Bari, 18–22 maggio 1981* (Rome, 1983), 135–58, both echoed in Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*, xix: "The Jews were not so much 'influenced' by the Italians as they were one organ in a larger cultural organism, a subculture that established its identity in a complex process of adaptation and resistance." See also, F. Luzzati Laganà, "La figura di Donnolo nello specchio della Vita di S. Nilo di Rossano," in G. Lacerenza (ed.), *Šabbetay Donnolo* (Naples, 2004), 72–88.

[35] J. Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (London, 1961), 24–36; S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 7 vols. (Berkeley, 1967–93), vol. I, 70–4.

[36] Laiou, "Institutional Mechanisms," 161, invokes this principle in relation to both finances and justice.

[37] For an analogous treatment of the Venetian Jews in the eastern Mediterranean, see D. Jacoby, "Venice and the Venetian Jews in the Eastern Mediterranean," in *Gli Ebrei e Venezia: secoli XIV–XVII*, ed. G. Cozzi (Milan, 1987), 46–7. R. S. Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire," *Speculum* 20 (1945): 25, calls the Jewish infrastructure "a state within a state."

and was thus wedded to it.[38] Between these two orientations of the Jewish economy, a semi-permeable barrier at once kept them separate from, and allowed them to interact with, one another. In their inner economy, the Jews pursued vital, day-to-day, communal interests that largely defined the community as a Jewish one. Investment in Hebraic education, the production of kosher edibles and the administration of Jewish law represent some of the exclusively Jewish enterprises that accounted for their self-containment within the larger economy.[39] As for the latter aspect of their economy, integrated into society at large, Jewish prominence in the textile and tanning industries brought their corporate contribution into the mainstream of economic and social life. The porosity between these two aspects of the Jewish economy emerges in the fact that both worked on a local and international level, and the success of one translated into opportunities for the other.[40] The two economies, though easily distinguished, demonstrably relied on a single, shared infrastructure of law, culture, languages, personal relationships and interests.[41]

As a result of this system, the model of competing impulses, i.e., integration versus segregation, ceases to describe their reality; rather, from the

[38] Compare with the political analysis of E. Bareket, *Fustat on the Nile: the Jewish Elite in Medieval Egypt* (Leiden, 1999), 77, and contrast to n. 34 above.

[39] M. Toch, "Between Impotence and Power: the Jews in the Economy and Polity of Medieval Europe," *Poteri economici e poteri politici*, ed. S. Cavaciocchi, Settimane di studio 30 (Florence, 1999), 230.

[40] Effectively, the Jewish condition as a Diasporic minority simultaneously confirmed and inverted Colin Renfrew's model. According to Renfrew, "Trade as Action," passim, local, internal trade redistributed goods, while long-distance trade afforded the opportunity for exchange. This system applies to the Jews, but equally and at the same time, the redistribution of Jewish wealth, in the form of books, advantageous marriages, scholarly academies, etc., took place over great distance and across borders. Meanwhile, their exogenous exchange took place right in the cities and towns where they lived. The key lies in the fact that both shared a single infrastructure for communication and trade.

[41] This much is well established, and perusal of the first volume of S. D. Goitein's *A Mediterranean Society: Economic Foundations*, will bear it out for medieval society in general. See evidence of Church commerce in F. van Doorninck, Jr., "Byzantine Shipwrecks," in *EHB*, 901. For doubling-up of political, non-economic exchange with trade, see A. E. Laiou, "Economic and Non-Economic Exchange," in *EHB*, 693.

In terms of Karl Polanyi's distinction between internal and external trade, which he associates with proximity and distance, respectively, it seems that the Jews of Byzantium partially invert his model; the external trade, the point at which merchandise enters the broader Byzantine market, was largely local – in Thebes, Constantinople or Corinth, for example. The great distances that the Jews covered, meanwhile, united faraway communities but functioned on purely internal social and religious mechanisms. See G. Dalton, "Karl Polanyi's Analysis of Long-Distance Trade and His Wider Paradigm," and K. Polanyi, "Traders and Trade," both in *Ancient Civilization and Trade*, ed. J. A. Sabloff and C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (Albuquerque, 1975), 101–14, 149–54; McCormick, "Byzantium on the Move," 14. Of course, Jews on the originating end of the Byzantine-Jewish import trade were often Byzantine Jews abroad, rendering the external element of their trade distant and international as well.

beginning, the integrationist economy of the Jews was a function of their segregationist one and vice versa.[42] Bluntly put, this two-tiered economic structure that kept the Jews from meaningful contact with non-Jews also promoted that contact. And in this symbiosis, the economy mirrored the two facets of Byzantine-Jewish identity, Roman and Jewish. Though distinct, these facets often coalesced and, even more than that, cross-fertilized one another.[43] Furthermore, the stability of this system – largely based on ties of kinship, culture and religion – continued to serve the Jews of Byzantium, even as they faced the increased competition of the Italian Maritimes, beginning in the tenth century.

The twin structure of the Jewish economy depended on the somewhat surprising degree of belonging in the *Byzantine* context. This economic situation had its roots in two salient historical conditions. First of all, at the most basic level, the simple fact of Roman Jewry's antiquity – in both the western and eastern reaches of the empire – imbued the community with much more than foreign status.[44] In some sense, even if imperfectly, the edict of Caracalla defined the Jews as Roman citizens. Concurrently however, a second condition, namely, the Jews' religious exceptionality, imposed practical limits on their civic participation and qualified their status. This delicate balance of Jewish particularism and participation in Roman society endured in both law and custom, punctuated by disruptions of varying magnitude in the political landscape.[45] Though two revolts in the first and second centuries, respectively, resulted in Jewish defeat with epochal shifts in Jewish life and governance from within, these wars did not fundamentally overturn the Roman legal principle whereby the Jews could maintain their way of life. The Jews enjoyed freedom from adherence to the state religion, as well as exemption from service on the city councils and in

[42] Here, Jonathan Hall's claim that "in the act of crossing boundaries [ethnic] demarcations are reaffirmed," though posited in reference to a different epoch, nonetheless applies; see J. M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge and New York, 1997), 29; Bonfil, "Una storiografia," 214.

[43] D. Jacoby, "Foreigners and the Urban Economy in Thessalonike, 1150–1450," *DOP* 57 (2003): 86–8; cf. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 107, citing L. Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus*, ed. and Eng. trans. M. Sainsbury, L. Dumont and B. Gulati (Chicago, 1980), 191.

[44] Abulafia, "The Italian Other," 228–9.

[45] The term *religio licita* first appears in Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, ed. and Fr. trans. J.-P. Waltzing (Paris, 1929), 47, chap. 21. Tertullian preempts the charge of innovation against the Christians. He says, "One might argue … that [Christianity] harbors something of its very own undertaking under the umbrella of a most venerable and obviously sanctioned religion," by which he means Judaism. M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews under Roman and Byzantine Rule* (Oxford, 1976), chap. 2, uses the term to characterize the entire principle of Jewish acceptance in Roman law, although I know of no legal definition of the Jews as a *religio licita*, even though that is how many refer to it.

the military – provided they paid their taxes and remained faithful to the state.[46] Already in antiquity, Roman authorities and the Jewish community had reached a functional accommodation.

With the rise of Christianity, Rome and Zion entered a stage of more reciprocal ideological rivalry. Even though the Jews managed to maintain many of their rights and privileges, the new terms of their conflict with Rome exacerbated those segregationist forces that had already existed to some degree in Roman-Jewish antiquity.[47] This heightened conflict took very specific political and economic shape in the termination of the office of the Jewish Patriarch in Tiberias. Until Theodosius II (r. 408–50), the Patriarch had enjoyed legal status as the head of Roman Jewry, collecting Jewish taxes and relaying a portion of them to Rome. Connected with local Jewish leaders, known as *archisynagogoi*, through an official system of emissaries, the Patriarchate had provided a reliable channel for the negotiation and payment of Jewish taxes, and it had also formalized a Mediterranean Jewish network.[48] Beginning with the abolition of the Patriarchate, Theodosius II and successive emperors gradually diminished the privileges accorded the Jews, increasing their tax burden and sapping their civil protections. Justinian I (r. 527–65) interfered increasingly in otherwise purely Jewish affairs (such as the synagogue service), and decisively imposed the financial burdens of the city councils on the Jews.[49] By the time of Heraclius, the vestiges of Jewish national status had given way to a more vulnerable status that defined Judaism first and foremost as a religion – not so vulnerable as a heretical one, but a dissenting one nonetheless and comparatively unprotected.[50] Nevertheless, though now completely stripped of any traces of political independence, Byzantine Jewry persisted with an economic and religious infrastructure that still allowed for considerable functional autonomy, even as the new political landscape of the Arab conquest reshaped ties among Jews throughout and without the empire. The link between the Jews' cultural-religious status and their economic status therefore reflected their roots in Roman antiquity, and it continued to do so well into the Roman Middle Ages.

[46] A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, 1987), 67–71.
[47] A. Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," in *Jews and Other Minorities* (Jerusalem, 1995), 55.
[48] *CTh*, 16.8.8, 13; 16.8.14.
[49] For a brief and apt overview of financial issues, see P. Argenti, *The Religious Minorities of Chios* (Cambridge, 1970), 47–54.
[50] D. Boyarin, "The Christian Invention of Judaism: the Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion," *Representations* 85 (2004): 22–4.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE JEWS

To be sure, if a full-length treatment of Byzantine-Jewish history from the economic perspective answers certain questions particularly well, it necessarily abstains from answering others. It perhaps goes without saying that Byzantine-Jewish economic history does not speak to such intriguing questions as the Jewish role in the development of Iconoclasm or the causes of the Byzantine anti-Jewish polemic.[51] Still, the nature of economic history nevertheless allows for considerable breadth in the range of topics that it does touch. Depending on one's definition of economic history, even subjects that ostensibly pertain to the realm of religious or political history also figure in the economic. Here the definition owes much to the categories described by S. D. Goitein in *A Mediterranean Society*. From his broad perspective, economic history means the study of the exchange of resources, both material and human, and it makes explicit a claim that has frequently remained implicit among previous scholarship, namely, that the investments, professional pursuits and trade of the Byzantine Jews give discernible shape to these internal and external relationships.[52]

Less expectedly perhaps, Byzantine-Jewish economic history fails to address one important issue that typically falls under the purview of economic history: price.[53] The exchange of human and material resources assumes an appreciation of relative value; that is, it attributes value to one resource in terms of another. However, whereas today the most convenient measuring rod of value is currency, medieval society was only beginning to take the conceptual step of applying value to coins, at least in day-to-day transactions. Consequently, an economic history of

[51] The problems in this question are vexatious indeed, from both a Christian perspective and a Jewish one; see R. Bonfil, "The 'Vision of Daniel'," 122–3; S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III*, CSCO 346 (Louvain, 1973).

[52] Following a broad definition of exchange, as per Laiou, "Economic and Non-Economic Exchange," 681–96.

[53] A fascinating text edited by N. Oikonomides, "Quelques boutiques de Constantinople au Xe s.: prix, loyers, imposition (*Cod. Patmiacus 171*)," *DOP* 26 (1972): 345–56, describes the prices for the sale (6–10 lb of gold) and rent (25–38 nomismata) of ateliers similar to those which Jews might well have run in the textile industry. Studies, such as J.-C. Cheynet *et al.*, "Prix et salaires à Byzance (Xe–XVe siècle)," in *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire byzantin*, ed. C. Abadie-Reynal *et al.* (Paris, 1981–91), 339–74, have changed the landscape, though the fundamental difficulty, as expressed by S. Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," in *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, ed. M. Postan and E. Miller, vol. II, *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1987, 2nd edn.), 164, persists.

Byzantine Jewry does not offer much in the way of determining how much something cost.[54] Still, even with limited information on specific quantities and prices, the study of the Byzantine-Jewish economy exposes those realms in which the Jews invested not only their money, but also their time, youth, energy and political capital. In sum, the topic speaks very eloquently to the *quality* of their values, especially those which have no price. Additionally, there are specific cases, most notably marriage contracts, where currency does define value, even if these examples prove more exceptional than regular.

If the primary sources offer the comfort of a cohesive, if complicated, concept of the Byzantine-Jewish economy, they nonetheless require great care, on account of three particular problems inherent in studying them. First, the sources have survived in great variety, both of genre and precision, as relates to economic topics. Explicitly economic texts such as Benjamin of Tudela's famous *Itinerary*, the *Book of the Eparch* or Jewish marriage contracts are rare. In the same vein, since Judaism embraces ethnicity, law and language, in addition to religion, and since most sources deal with economic matters in passing or obliquely, one might fairly ask if many of the sources adduced here actually belong to the economic history of the Jews at all. For instance, when Evagrius Scholasticus describes the mid-sixth-century miracle of a Jewish boy who converts to Christianity, the fact that the boy's father made a living by blowing glass simply gives life to the narrative. In addition to its marginality in the text, the account of glassblowing may or may not be altogether apocryphal, depending on how one interprets the historicity of the larger account, which is subject to the standards of polemical literature, not to those of economic history.[55] Conversely, one may overlook important, non-economic aspects of a given document that appear, superficially, to deal with economics. The most notable example is the *Book of the Eparch*, which contains a single clause that excludes Jews from the export of silk. The eminent medieval historian Robert S. Lopez viewed this exclusion as, first and foremost, an ideological restriction on the Jews, whereas I am inclined to see the same legislation as a purely economic posture of the state in protecting its commercial interests from the Jews and

[54] For one exception, a *ketubbah*, or marriage contract, from Mastaura enumerates values, A. Muthesius, "Essential Processes, Looms, and Technical Aspects of the Production of Silk Textiles," in *EHB*, 165; C. Morrisson and J.-C. Cheynet, "Prices and Wages in the Byzantine World," in *EHB*, 856.

[55] J. Duffy, "Passing Remarks on Three Byzantine Texts," *Palaeoslavica* 10/1 (2003): 54–6; *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius with the Scholia*, ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London, 1898; reprinted Amsterdam, 1964), 185; *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, Fr. trans. A.-J. Festugière, *Byzantion* 65/2 (1975): 400.

from others outside the controlled system of guilds.[56] To be sure, Byzantine history justifies both views, but the question becomes something subtler: What view represents the operative, primary purpose and consequence of the text?

The question, moreover, is not merely academic, because depending on how one answers it, one then reasons backwards to posit a real-life state of affairs. For Lopez, the restriction on the Jewish silk trade reflects the continuation of an ancient religious gripe against the Jews, for which the silk industry simply served as a vehicle. For me, the same law indicates that the Jews posed a real threat to imperial interests in the silk trade, and only secondarily – if at all – does it reflect any systemic antagonism to the Jews. The divergent implications are born, not out of two diametrically opposed interpretations but more precisely out of different emphases. Many steps in the development of a coherent economic history will follow this model, in which the economic aspect of a text takes center stage, not to the exclusion of other aspects but first among them. In this regard, placing the evidence in context will allow the reader to judge its applicability independently. It is hoped that the cumulative evidence supports the overall claims brought to bear, even when decisive exempla have not survived.

Second, historical investigation requires not only hypotheses but also some degree of outright speculation, and this is no less true of Byzantine-Jewish history with its sometimes scanty sources. In this field of research, even the basic outline of events may require a disquieting degree of speculative conclusions. Two methodological tools temper the otherwise dangerous dependency on historical speculation. First, whenever possible, these inferences rely on defensible analogy to other places or times, as well-grounded in primary sources as possible. Second, the act of speculation unremittingly requires transparency, allowing the readers to recognize, unambiguously, an historical inference as such. Given reasonable analogy and transparent communication of it, speculation can at least provide a set of acceptable assumptions, which might then serve as orientation for further study. Ideally, the caution inherent in this approach permits not only the establishment of a responsible historical narrative, but also the frank indication of that which is missing from it.

[56] Lopez, "Silk Industry," 1–42; for a similar view, see M. McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy* (Cambridge, 2001), 970. Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," 136–7, views this particular conflict, as do I, in terms of economic competition, though he attributes it to the Radhanites, whereas I see the Radhanites as less central a player in the region and period. Cf. A. Lewis, "The Danube Route and Byzantium, 802–1195," in *Actes du XIVe Congrès international des études byzantines* 2, ed. M. Berza (Bucharest, 1975), 363.

Third and finally, this history suffers somewhat from a dearth of sources and, much more so, from their unevenness. In the period spanning the tenth to twelfth centuries, the famous storehouse known as the Cairo Genizah served as a depository for old or worn documents and books, which piety required not be thrown out with common trash. There they sat until discovered in the nineteenth century by the Karaite scholar Abraham Firkovitch and, subsequently, by the Cambridge Talmudist Solomon Schechter. In the course of the twentieth century, the documents were mined – and continue to be mined – for information of extreme value, changing the face of medieval Mediterranean history. The Genizah's very wealth, however, threatens to distort the picture of economic activity as relates to the periods prior and subsequent to its assemblage of documents. It is as though a magnifying glass has been applied to the timeline, making that which is under it appear more prominent than the rest. At times, the increase in sources may faithfully represent greater activity, but the question always remains: Does the Genizah represent a genuine increase in both sources and activity, or did chance simply preserve a cache of documents that actually reflect continuity, or even diminution, of activity with the period prior to it? A partial answer comes only with careful corroboration from outside sources and balanced analysis.

BYZANTINE JEWS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN ECONOMY

Taking these potential pitfalls into consideration, the picture of the Byzantine-Jewish economy develops in relation to three broad topics: demography, the two tiers of the Jews' economy, and the perseverance of their economic interests through the twelfth century. The study of Jewish migration patterns over time illustrates the capacity of Byzantine Jews to collaborate with one another throughout the eastern Mediterranean in the Middle Byzantine period. By means of those relationships, the Jews developed a two-tiered economy in which their special, communal interests were furthered together with their interests in the larger Byzantine and regional markets. On the strength of this system, the Jews of Byzantium prospered in niche markets well into the twelfth century, as against the traditional historiography, which views the tenth to twelfth centuries as a period of Jewish economic decline.

The second chapter of this study addresses the demography of the Jews under the new order of the seventh century, and it maps the redistribution of their internal connections, which provided important opportunities for

new expressions of solidarity and strength. When the Arab conquest engulfed Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine, the contours of political jurisdiction entered a period of flux. Soon, Jewish communities throughout North Africa and the Levant also found themselves subject to the new Muslim polity (eventually a multiplicity of polities) and immersed in an entirely new cultural setting. Meanwhile the Jewry of southern Italy, Greece and Anatolia remained under the sovereignty of the Roman Empire, and they carried on in the Greek-speaking culture of previous generations. Still, the Jews bridged this new political breach across the Mediterranean Sea by means of the depth and persistence of their affinities to fellow Jews, as expressed in cultural norms, ethnic consciousness, mutually recognized legal authority, kinship and, of course, religion. Even when Hebrew began to rise to new prominence among the Byzantine Jews, filling the void left by Greek as the Jewish lingua franca, ongoing cultural and economic activity kept families, friends and colleagues in touch with each other. Ultimately, the Jewish experience changed primarily in that those channels of communication, which had previously been domestic to the Byzantine Empire, now became international.

The new scope of Jewish activity, now crossing borders of state and religion, may not have changed the foundational structure of intra-Jewish relations, but it did transform the practical manifestations of Jewish economic exchange in both the inner and integrated economies. One result of the Arab conquest was the increasing Byzantine-Jewish financial and human investment in the Talmudic academies of Iraq, in addition to their traditional commitment to the Palestinian academies. Islam now ruled over both centers of Jewish learning and leadership, Palestine and Iraq, which were previously situated in the Roman and Persian Empires, respectively. While cultural kinship endured between Palestine and the remaining Jews of Byzantium, political realities put access to Baghdad and Tiberias, in practical terms, on more equal footing. Consequently, perhaps beginning as early as the ninth century – well before significant numbers of Arabic-speaking Jews moved to Byzantium – the Iraqi academies increasingly attracted Byzantine-Jewish talent and funding.[57] In terms of the outward-oriented economy, the redrawing of the borders left far fewer Jews under Roman authority. Thus, the Arab conquest diminished the Jews' role as

[57] E. Rivkin, "The Saadia-David Ben Zakkai Controversy: a Structural Analysis," in *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman*, ed. M. Ben-Horin *et al.* (Philadelphia, 1962), 388–423, gives rich insight into ways in which politics, economics and religious geography played themselves out among the greatest institutions of tenth-century Judaism.

a significant minority tax base in the empire, and they therefore caused less concern from the seventh century onward.[58] Instead of tax revenue, Jewish trade took on new import on account of its international scope. Specifically, the Jews enjoyed unique access to services and goods from coreligionists abroad, by means of which they made up for disadvantages imposed on them by the local government, such as exclusion from the guilds.

The internal aspect of the Jewish economy occupies the third chapter of this study, and merits attention for three reasons. First of all, Jewish history has largely skipped over the Byzantine experience, and the history of exchange reveals much about the direction of communication and cultural ties. In this regard, the inner economy corresponds in some respects, but not all, to the technically defined category of non-economic exchange, that is, exchange that functioned on its own terms, without reference to the open market (for example, the economy of scholarship and communal maintenance). However, within this inner Jewish economy, some aspects entered the open markets, such as the redemption of captives, which was subject to externally determined prices and which sapped Jewish resources (instead of simply recycling them).[59] Equally importantly, the minority economy was simply too porous, too dependent on markets outside its control, such as grain, to attain the scale that would allow it to function as an independent microcosm. In this sense, the Jewish economy, though internally oriented and conceived for the benefit of Jews, did not approach the magnitude of other economies that had the capacity for a large non-economic component. Additionally, to the degree that the Jews of Byzantium used currency in these internal exchanges – which is almost impossible to measure – their exchanges have a built-in dependence on standards of value that existed outside of their own. Nonetheless, the point of reference of this aspect of the economy was always inward, always a force for community-building, regardless of the distance it spanned. Secondly but equally significantly, the inner economy deserves attention, because it consisted in those uniquely Jewish, mundane and practical activities that give life to, indeed justify, the very concept of a Jewish economy. And finally, as the complex of functions that governed the daily life of the Jewish minority, their inner economy

[58] Palestine had already entered into a period of decline as a Jewish population center; see Avi-Yonah, *The Jews*, 20, 241. The sources of the middle Byzantine period are virtually silent on this matter, as opposed to those of the early period. See Linder, *Imperial Legislation*, 71–2.

[59] For variations on the definition of "non-economic" exchange, see Laiou, "Economic and Non-Economic Exchange," 681–89; cf. Laiou, "Exchange and Trade, Seventh–Twelfth Centuries," in *EHB*, 681–770.

defines the limits of that semi-permeable membrane that both kept them separate and allowed them to engage with society. In other words, it effectively establishes the practical terms for those aspects of Jewish life in the empire that might be called autonomous.

Detailing the integrated aspect of the Jewish economy, chapter 4 analyzes the place of the Jews in the Byzantine economy and, by extension, Byzantine society at large. This broader economy of the Jews comprised two rubrics: the payment of taxes and the production and trade in cloth and leathers. It was through their tax contribution that the Jews offered their most direct and most palpable contribution to the imperial economy. By the Middle Byzantine period, the sources on Jewish taxation diminish in clarity as compared to the imperial codes of the early period. However, despite the murkiness of the Jewish tax status, the sources allow us to characterize their payments from both the Jewish and Byzantine perspectives in terms of the Jewish standing vis-à-vis the fisc – one key indication of their standing before the law. In all, the structures of taxation seem to apply to the Jews on fundamentally, though not entirely, similar terms to those of non-Jews.

More notably in the sources, the Jews made their mark as purveyors of raw and finished textiles, and they also served in allied professions as weavers, dyers and tanners. Before delving into the details of that economy, chapter 4 outlines the mechanisms of trade that allowed the Jews to exert an economic influence beyond their small numbers. Putting their social and religious structures to work to maximize efficiency, the Jews sometimes enjoyed regional or local dominance in certain sectors of textile production. Moreover, the Jewish involvement in textiles and tanning spanned not only the geographical but also the temporal extent of the empire and beyond. Thus, from a purely Byzantine perspective, the Jewish experience partially defines this industrial sector, an important component of the non-agricultural economy of the empire.[60] More than that, Jewish entrée into the markets of Byzantine towns instantiated the way in which minority coherence and focus resulted in their capacity to wield disproportionate influence in the small but significant textile markets.[61] At this juncture, where a small minority might leave its imprint on a given market within a vast imperial economy, the concept of an integrated economy coincides

[60] McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 578; regarding the demand side of the economy, see Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 163–4.

[61] On the relative importance of textiles in the Byzantine Empire, see Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 182–6.

with that of so-called "economic" exchange, from which at least one significant consequence followed. The Jews – even when they collaborated primarily with one another – ultimately expected that a direct and deep engagement with society at large, meaning the markets, would determine the value of their goods and provide their primary outlet.[62] This synergy between the inwardly and outwardly oriented economies lent itself to stunning consistency in the textile markets, for over a millennium, which speaks to their permanent and indispensable participation in the urban economy.[63]

The success of this system, I argue in chapter 5, leads to a necessary revision of certain assumptions that have guided Mediterranean Jewish history to date. This revision applies to both the Jews' place in Byzantine society and their economic position at large, in the tenth to twelfth centuries.[64] When, by the beginning of the eleventh century, circumstances conspired to place the Byzantine Empire at the geographical crossroads of expanding mercantilism, the Jews constituted only one among any number of contemporary minority groups, but their experience was conducive to a more positive role than has previously been assigned to them.[65] Effectively, the Jews of the Byzantine Empire leveraged, at one and the same time, both their distinctive qualities and those that reflected their historical rootedness in the Roman Empire, in order to prosper and even to compete. The first part of this argument takes as its starting point the historiographical tradition, pioneered by Alan Harvey and others, that demonstrates commercial growth beginning in this period. The Jewish experience strongly supports this claim, and even, in some respects, bridges differences among its various proponents. The Byzantine Jews' successes in trade, their relations to the Venetians and even their struggles with better-equipped competitors illustrate how they functioned in an expanding mercantile economy.

If, thus far, this argument works from within the established claims for economic growth, its second part challenges the way we have traditionally viewed the Jews' place in that growth. Beyond any number of underlying, infrastructural factors that paved the way for the rise of the cash economy

[62] Laiou, "Economic and Non-Economic Exchange."

[63] See D. Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry in Constantinople," in *Byzantium, Latin Romania and the Mediterranean* (Aldershot, 2001), article 11.

[64] See comments regarding this method, by R. S. Lopez, "The Trade of Medieval Europe: the South," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, ed. M. Postan and E. Miller, vol. II, *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1987, 2nd edn.), 309.

[65] A. Laiou, "Byzantium and the Commercial Revolution," in *Europa medievale e mondo bizantino*, ed. G. Arnaldi and G. Cavallo (Rome, 1997), 239–53.

and urban development, historians routinely point to the role of the Venetians in opening up new venues for international trade, broader and more varied markets, and new routes of communication to the eastern Mediterranean.[66] Starting with Henri Pirenne, the Italian Maritimes were viewed not merely as mercantile revolutionaries but also as usurping the Jews in international trade. According to Pirenne's now outdated view, the Jews had dominated Merovingian and Carolingian trade, because the underdeveloped economy of the European West had offered niche markets for the small-but-mobile Jewish traders who could cross between Islam and Christendom with ease. A new and widely accepted appreciation of the contribution of a variety of groups, including the Byzantines, has helped to overturn this simple construction of Jewish commercial preeminence in the Carolingian period. Still, in spite of the generalized revision of the Pirenne thesis, the aspect of it that presents the Jews as having been pushed out by the Italians still has currency. According to that argument, beginning in the tenth century, Venice, followed by Genoa and others, offered a dynamic, Christian alternative to the Jews, ultimately ousting them from their role in international trade.

The economic history of Byzantine Jewry does not contradict the view that the Venetians and other Italians were the primary vehicle of the Commercial Revolution; it does, however, demand that we reconsider the relative prominence of the Jews and their supposed decline. True, as the Italians came to prominence there was a period of competition between them and the Jews, implying some degree of conflict in mercantile interests. It is also true that the Venetians enjoyed the infrastructure of de facto statehood and the sanction of Christianity, allowing their capacity for trade to outstrip that of the Jews. Nevertheless, even if the Jews eventually ceased to compete, they nonetheless continued to contribute and, just as importantly, to prosper. By the late Byzantine period, the Byzantine Jews had folded their infrastructure into that of the Venetians and Genoese – a natural marriage, since they functioned on some similar mercantile principles. Unsurprisingly, therefore, an examination of the Byzantine-Jewish experience reveals that the Venetians did not usurp the Jews; on the contrary, Jewish trade, especially Byzantine-Jewish trade, actually followed in the wake of Venice and shared in the prosperity she generated. Significantly, the larger Byzantine economy itself followed a similar trajectory of urban growth vis-à-vis Venetian mercantilism. In this confluence of the Jewish and Byzantine fates during the Commercial

[66] A. Lewis, "Was Eastern Europe European in the High Middle Ages?" *The Polish Review* 2 (1957): 18.

Revolution, economic history further reveals itself at the center of important trends in the complex interactions between the Jewish minority and the wider Byzantine society.

The overarching picture, though limited to the middle Byzantine period, will inevitably leave holes between the various sources and conclusions, as is typical of Byzantine-Jewish history. But it is hoped that its focus will shed light on some important questions, and that it might recast some common assumptions of the Jewish experience in Byzantium and elsewhere.

CHAPTER 2

Byzantine Jews throughout the Mediterranean: fluidity and exchange

The twelfth-century traveler Benjamin of Tudela, in his *Itinerary*, describes and quantifies the Byzantine-Jewish communities along his famous route. Building on his account and a number of other primary sources, modern scholarship has met with some success in outlining Byzantine-Jewish settlements, and as a result of these efforts, the map of the Byzantine Empire now includes many cities and towns known to have housed Jewish populations.[1] However, the mere demarcation of these places and the counting of the Jews, while instructive, do not fully satisfy the needs of economic history. Rather, these reports provide a first step in the larger process of describing and interpreting the Jewish economy, which extends beyond the pinpointing of static locations. Economic history, fundamentally rooted in the concept of exchange, requires a representation of the *movement* of people, goods and ideas among fixed points, with particularly compelling applications to the Jews of the Middle Ages whose Diasporic existence colored every aspect of their lives.[2] Studied in this more dynamic way, the demography of Byzantine Jewry serves an essential purpose in laying the groundwork for the economic history of the relevant Jewish communities and its meaning.

Four patterns characterize Jewish settlement and movement in the Middle Byzantine period. First, within the empire, the Jews generally, although not exclusively, inclined towards its urban centers and trade routes. Abraham ibn Da'ud, Benjamin's contemporary, points out the presence of the Jews on the sea routes; he refers to Jewish settlement "on all the islands of the Greek sea from the land of Venice and Genoa as far as Constantinople and Byzantium."[3] Ibn Da'ud's description finds pithy support in the epitaph of

[1] See maps in Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 51; Ankori, *Karaites*, frontispiece. See below, n. 25 for examples of Jewish settlements attested in sources other than Benjamin.

[2] Renfrew, "Trade as Action," 4, 6.

[3] G. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition by Abraham ibn Daud* (Philadelphia, 1967), 93. C. Colafemmina, "Gli Ebrei a Taranto nella documentazione epigrafica (saec. IV–X)," in *La chiesa di Taranto*, ed. C. D. Fonseca and D. Motolese (Galatina, 1977), 114 (= *CII*, no. 621).

"the wife of Leon b. David from Melos."[4] From this and similar evidence, Zvi Ankori infers economic motives for this demographic tendency; he perceives "a persistent gravitation of the Jewish settler to the coastal cities – Ephesus, Attaleia, Nicaea, Pylae, Strobilos – and to inland towns which served as hubs or objectives of military and commercial traffic, such as Synnada, Khonai, Amorium, Cotyaeum, Mastaura" and Ioannina.[5] Jewish settlement and conspicuous cultural and economic successes in Byzantine southern Italy further confirm Ankori's general principle.[6] Additionally, other cities on the borders of the Byzantine Empire also may have housed Jewish communities.[7] To be sure, the Jewish Diasporic experience always reminds us that commerce loomed large in motivating Jewish communication and travel. But profit was not the sole end; a variety of external and internal forces, economic, communal, spiritual and political, conspired to reinforce the demographic trend towards hubs of activity.

The second characteristic of Byzantine-Jewish settlement followed as the consequence of precisely one such political moment. The rapid seventh-century expansion of the Islamic Caliphate drained the Byzantine Empire of important segments of its population, including many Jewish communities. Subsequently, the third trend reversed the second; following the so-called Byzantine Renaissance of the mid-tenth century, the Jews found increasing

[4] Ankori, *Karaites*, 117; Starr, *JBE*, 29–30. Regarding some cities, like Adrianople, only tantalizing hints remain about the possibility of Jews having settled there in the middle Byzantine period; see Ankori, *Karaites*, 151, n. 256, and A. Danon, "Adrianople," in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York and London 1901–6), vol. I, 213b. On the rise of Strobilos, see Ch. Bouras, "Aspects of the Byzantine City, Eighth–Fifteenth Centuries," in *EHB*, 503.

[5] Ankori, *Karaites*, 117; for Ioannina, see R. Dalven, *The Jews of Ioannina* (Philadelphia, 1990), 3–5, dating from the ninth century. Viewed through the lens of Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 196, 198–9, this geography of Jewish activity matches not only the opportunity to engage in commerce and industry, but also the opportunity to affect them on a national scale.

[6] For Byzantine southern Italy as a region of cultural and political exchange, see S. Benin, "Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Byzantine Italy," in *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communications, and Interactions: Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner*, ed. W. M. Brinner *et al.* (Leiden and Boston, 2000), 27–35.

[7] R. Bonfil, "Vision of Daniel," 133–7, argues for a reading that lists a number of cities, with the assumption that it is at least possible that these cities also housed Jewish communities. According to Bonfil's reading, the pending apocalypse will doom the inhabitants of the Roman Empire, "but happy is he who lives in Rome [the city], Sal[ento], Sicily, Beria [Βέρρια], Strongulon [Στρόγγυλον], Asiniad [unidentified], Arm[enia], and in Strobilos. Happy are all the inhabitants of those places." Bonfil, 134, acknowledges that the identifications of all these towns, except for Rome and Sicily, are highly problematic. Certainly the assumption of Jewish communities there must be treated with the greatest of caution, on account of Bonfil's cogent argument, 137–8, 141, that the Hebrew apocalypse, called the "Vision of Daniel," relies on Greek works of the same genre. Contrast his list with that of A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry, from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London and New York, 1971), 201–4, translating from L. Ginzberg, *Ginze Schechter* (Heb.), 3 vols. (New York, 1928–9), vol. I, 313–23. For another case of a disputed attestation of Strobilos, see below, pp. 230–2.

advantage in moving to the Byzantine Empire. Fourth and finally, these migratory trends progressively augmented, or at the very least diversified, communication among the Jews of the eastern Mediterranean, as personal and business relationships criss-crossed the region over new and changing borders.

This schematization of Byzantine-Jewish migration is consonant with the modern interpretation of economic development during the Middle Byzantine period. With some variation among them, Byzantine economic historians generally consider the seventh through eighth (or perhaps ninth) centuries to be a protracted period of recovery from the military, agricultural, demographic and ideological trials of the empire. In the tenth century the successes of the Macedonian dynasty began to lay the groundwork for urban economic growth in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[8] In this last period prior to the Fourth Crusade, commerce further expanded, despite – or paradoxically, thanks to – a number of somewhat controversially interpreted causes: distribution of wealth and power among landowners, the arrival of the Italians, the augmentation of trade, and the debasement and diversification of coinage.[9] In embarking on a period of demographic growth in roughly the mid-to-late tenth century, the Byzantine-Jewish population mirrors these vicissitudes of the larger Byzantine economy. Specifically, within this wider Byzantine trend, the Jews participated in its nascent mercantilism, such as it was. Since trade was a minor sector of the Byzantine economy, nothing precluded a small, organized and mobile minority from influencing it.[10] Indeed, evidence from the tenth century

[8] A. Laiou, "Byzantium and the Commercial Revolution," passim.

[9] The new orthodoxy in this question has much numismatic evidence to back it up, as summarized by M. F. Hendy, *Alexius I to Michael VIII, 1081–1261*, vol. IV of *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, ed. A. R. Bellinger and P. Grierson (Washington, D.C., 1999), 9–31; Hendy, *Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire 1081–1261* (Washington, D.C., 1969); Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985); Hendy, "Byzantium 1081–1204: an Economic Reappraisal," in *The Economy, Fiscal Administration and Coinage of Byzantium* (Northampton, 1989), art. 2; Harvey, *Economic Expansion*; P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993); M. Gil, *A History of Palestine, 643–1099*, trans. E. Broido (Cambridge and New York, 1992), sec. 482; G. Dagron, "The Urban Economy, Seventh–Twelfth Centuries," in *EHB*, 402; C. Morrisson, "Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulaton," *EHB*, 958–61. M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204*, 2nd edn. (New York, 1997), offers a brief summary of the argument in his introduction.

The precise periodization of this rise of Byzantine fortunes is being revised, however, from a number of points of view, even among those who generally accept it or some version of it, such as Dagron, "The Urban Economy," 396; and from the agricultural point of view, J. Lefort, "The Rural Economy, Seventh–Twelfth Centuries," in *EHB*, 232–3.

[10] Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c. 300–1450* (New York and Cambridge, 1985), 157, and Hendy, "Byzantium 1081–1204," 48, convincingly demonstrates, with the help of Benjamin of Tudela, that the total Byzantine revenue from trade paled in comparison to that of agriculture.

confirms that the Byzantine and Venetian authorities acknowledged the importance of Jews in commerce, even as they tried to prohibit them from it.[11]

These shifts of Byzantine-Jewish settlement not only reflect those of the Byzantine economy, but they also explain the nature of Jews' own economic development, particularly its international breadth. The documentation of these demographic trends, however, presents a challenge as well as an opportunity in the analysis of that development.[12] The challenge lies in establishing an approximate census of Byzantine Jewry, both settlements and individuals, which relies heavily on a single source, Benjamin of Tudela. Unfortunately the *Itinerary*, indispensable though it be, raises as many questions as it answers. Thus, modern quantifications, of necessity dependent on Benjamin's problematic estimates, offer little substantial material with which to work reliably. However, Benjamin's *Itinerary*, in conjunction with other sources, does allow for an accurate discernment of the overarching and dynamic pattern of Jewish settlement and movement, and herein lies the opportunity. Understanding the trends of Jewish Byzantine settlement helps to establish one of the fundamental qualities of the Byzantine-Jewish economy: its transnationality. The often surprising breadth of the Byzantine-Jewish economy, both domestic and international, results precisely from population shifts that brought about a network of Greek- and Arabic-speaking Jewish residents throughout and without the Byzantine Empire.

This network covered the entire eastern Mediterranean and relied on constant contact over land and sea. Both before and after the pivotal tenth century, Byzantine Jews, that is, Jews who either bore Greek names, relied on the Greek language, or lived in Byzantine territory, are attested throughout the region bordered by southern Italy in the west, Syria-Palestine in the east, the Crimea in the north, and North Africa in the south. These Byzantine-Jewish communities owed their existence to a variety of factors, including major border shifts and economic forces that encouraged migration. Of course, the mere fact of Greek-Jewish settlement abroad does not, in and of itself, prove international economic connections. For this last conclusion, evidence of continued exchange across the outlined territory

[11] Witness the attempts to limit the Jews' paticipation in international trade: once in 912, J. Koder, ed. and trans., *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen*, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 33 (Vienna, 1991), 100–1; and again in 992, J. Zepos and P. Zepos (eds.), *Jus Graecoromanum* (1931; reprint, Aalen, 1962), vol. I, 261.

[12] Dagron, "Urban Economy," 402.

complements these demographics, and demonstrates the potential for, and realization of, extended economic activity throughout the region. Indeed, these overseas relationships (which actually united not just Byzantine, but also Spanish, North African, Levantine and Italian Jews) constituted the backbone of the entire Jewish economy in the Mediterranean. Even as the Venetians and Genoese began to dominate Mediterranean trade, the Jewish traders were already regulating themselves with their own law and functioning within systems of outposts and depositories, in a manner similar to that which would later bring success to the Italian city-states.[13] Thus, the profound interdependence between demography and economics constitutes an essential and comparatively unexamined facet of Byzantine-Jewish history.[14]

THE PROBLEM OF NUMBERS

A reliable estimate of the Byzantine-Jewish population in any given generation has eluded scholars, though the obstacles have not dissuaded them from trying to provide it.[15] Michael Avi-Yonah attempted such a census for the early Byzantine period when Palestine, still majority-Jewish, was part of the empire.[16] For the middle period, many scholars, including Samuel Krauss, Salo Baron, André Andréadès, Joshua Starr, Zvi Ankori and David

[13] See Jacoby, "Venice and the Venetian Jews," 32, and I. A. Agus, *Urban Civilzation in Pre-Crusade Europe* (Leiden, 1965), 4ff. O. R. Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World* (Cambridge, 2003), 109.

[14] A. Andréadès, "The Jews of the Byzantine Empire," *Economic History* 3 (1934–7): 1–23. Andréadès, though addressing some crucial issues in this article, does not even mention the existence of Jews outside the empire, even though the evidence from J. Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs* (Oxford, 1920; reprint, with a preface and reader's guide by S. D. Goitein, New York, 1970), passim, had made it clear that Byzantine Jews lived, at the very least, in Egypt.

I. Dimitroukas, *Reisen und Verkehr im Byzantinische Reich vom Anfang des 6. Jhr. bis zur Mitte des 11. Jhr.*, Historical Monographs 18 (Athens, 1997), presents a two-volume picture of travel and communication in the Byzantine Empire, in which he addresses, without ever truly integrating, the major role of the Jews in precisely the topic of the book. He does not, however, fail to note specific cases; for example, he recognizes (p. 131) the importance of the Jews in the sea trade, but his otherwise comprehensive book simply does not capture the magnitude of the Jewish participation in travel and commerce in the period he covers.

Regarding the role of demographics in the course of economic development, an instructive comparison can be drawn to the Spanish Jews. After the Expulsions of 1492 and 1497, the Jews settled in, among other places, the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, some Jews attempted to remain secretly Jewish while nominally converting in order to remain in Spain. These crypto-Jews were able to establish fruitful relationships with the exiles. The Republic of Venice eagerly took advantage of this unique network, and invited the Spanish Jews – both those who were expelled and those who dodged the Inquisition – to settle in Venice and revive their mercantile economy. See B. Ravid, *Economics and Toleration in Seventeenth Century Venice* (Jerusalem, 1978), 70, 78–9.

[15] See A. E. Laiou, "Human Resources," *EHB*, 47–55.

[16] Avi-Yonah, *The Jews*, 20, 139, 220–1.

Jacoby, set forth parameters and worked within them to estimate the numerical strength of the Byzantine Jews.[17] They all rely fundamentally on Benjamin's*Itinerary*, but they come to quite different conclusions. Nevertheless, even though these estimates vary greatly, the variance among them is negligible relative to the total Byzantine population, thanks to the paucity of the Jews in absolute terms. The most conservative counting comes to one-tenth of 1 percent of the empire's total estimated

[17] S. Krauss, *Studien zur byzantinisch-jüdischen Geschichte* (Vienna, 1914), 78–9, reads Benjamin of Tudela as counting families, not individuals. Moreover, he fully accepts Shefatiah's claim that Basil I ruled over 1,000 Jewish communities. This obviously poetic license generated historical speculation and study by L. Zunz, *Die Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters* (Frankfurt, 1920; repr. Hildesheim, 1967), 170; and A. Neubauer, "The Early Settlement of the Jews in Southern Italy," *JQR* 4 (1892): 606–25, 613–14, where Neubauer reprints one version of the introduction to this poem, MS Günzberg 615.

Krauss, *Studien*, 78–9, finds further support in the claim of Petahyah of Regensburg that "There are so many congregations in Greece, that the land of Israel could not contain them were they settled therein." See below, n. 127. Moreover, with respect to the problem of shifting borders, Krauss (p. 82) assumes that, immediately after the Venetian conquest of islands such as Rhodes, one can still consider the Jewish community there to be a Byzantine one. Given these interpretations of history, Krauss falls squarely in the maximalist camp, even though he gives no specific numbers.

Starr, *JBE*, 34–6, follows A. Andréadès, "Sur Benjamin de Tudèle," *BZ* 30 (1930): 458–61, who claims that the numbers set by Benjamin do not refer to families, but to individuals. The crux of the argument resides in an analysis of the growth rate of the Jewish population of Chios. Taking the case of Chios, Andréadès and Starr concur that two different counts of the Jewish population, separated by less than a century, could only make sense if Benjamin counted individuals. According to an edict of Constantine X, Chios contained 15 Jewish families in 1062. Benjamin's twelfth-century figure of 400, on the same island, would represent too extreme a growth rate, if it, too, represented families. Although Andréadès poses a coherent argument, one might account for the twenty-sevenfold growth of Chios' Jewish population by pointing to the general influx of Jews into the empire, such as described below. Significantly, Andréadès, "Sur Benjamin de Tudèle," 461, qualifies his opinion as to Benjamin's assessments, claiming that at least in the smaller communities, the numbers must refer to individuals, while he leaves the question open as to the larger communities. See also Andréadès, "The Jews of the Byzantine Empire," 2–7. Here Andréadès arrives at a round number of 15,000 Jews in the entire empire, which accounts for 0.1% of the estimated general population of 15,000,000. D. Jacoby, "Les quartiers juifs de Constantinople à l'époque byzantine," *Byzantion* 37 (1967): 185–8, believes, using estimates of population density, that Benjamin's numbers refer to individuals, at least with respect to Constantinople. For an argument in favor of taking Benjamin at his word for 400 souls on the island of Chios, see Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 93–9.

Ankori, *Karaites*, 155–63, also addresses the problem. He presents a solid critique of the difficulties posed by Benjamin's account, and makes a case for mulitplying the total number in Benjamin's *Itinerary* by a factor of ten. He arrives at the tenfold calculation by assuming, contrary to Starr and Andréadès, that Benjamin's numbers refer, on the whole, to families, and he asssumes five people to a family. He then assumes that Benjamin only accounted for one half of the total number of Jewish settlements; hence Ankori doubles the fivefold figure. Taking Benjamin's total of 8,603 he arrives at a round figure of 85,000 Jewish souls, or approximately 0.5% of the Byzantine population. S. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 18 vols. (New York, 1957), vol. III, 323, n. 29, without presenting a step-by-step argument, intuitively arrives at 100,000. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 3, follows Baron. Despite his different counting, Ankori, *Karaites*, 160, agrees with Starr on one major point of the Jewish population and the migratory trends: the persecution of Romanus Lecapenus (r. 920–44) marked the nadir of the Jewish population up to that point. P. Charanis, in his review of *Karaites in Byzantium*, *American Historical Review* 66 (1960): 193, considers Ankori's numbers to be "far too high."

population; the more liberal counts tend to hover around one-half of 1 percent. Thus, the various modern interpretations of Benjamin's *Itinerary* agree as to the order of magnitude of the Jewish population, even though these estimates differ as much as fivefold. That is to say, the Jews constituted a portion of the Byzantine population roughly on the order of one-tenth of 1 percent.

All of these attempts, well-considered though they be, suffer profound limitations, even beyond the fundamental impediment posed by the dearth of evidence outside of the problematic *Itinerary*.[18] For example, the shifting borders and spasmodic conquests of the day render parameters themselves unstable. Samuel Krauss addressed this question of changing borders, when he, first among all the scholars, attempted to tackle the problem of numbers.[19] Ultimately, he chose not to risk a quantitative estimate. Another problem arises from the nature of the sources; in the literary evidence, actual numbers are either scarce or highly troped. Such is the case of Shefatiah who, in a poem, claims that Basil I "ruled over 1000 Jewish communities."[20] Perhaps more significantly and closely related to the reality of changing borders, the makeup of the Byzantine-Jewish community itself defies simple definition. Decidedly heterogeneous, as the patterns of cultural, human and economic exchange prove, the very quality which defines a Jew as *Byzantine* requires some attention. In sum, detailed estimates offer only the most rudimentary tools for the social historian.

From the point of view of economic history, however, those impediments to a reliable population count themselves offer insights. The shifting borders and broad trends of migration, even as they rendered census-taking impossible, created those underlying demographic conditions that allowed Byzantine Jewry to take advantage of dynamic international relationships. The resultant heterogeneity engendered, and then reinforced, the ability of the Byzantine Jews – who typically benefited from familial, cultural and linguistic ties – to work across international borders.

[18] Ankori, *Karaites*, 158, n. 277; Baron, *History*, III, 322f., n. 29. For the textual-critical and literary problems of Benjamin's *Itinerary*, see G. Busi, "Binyamin da Tudela: nuove avventure bibliografiche," *Materia Giudaica: Bollettino dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio del giudaismo* 3 (1997): 39–40, where Busi calls into question Benjamin's estimate of the size of the Jerusalem Jewish community.

[19] Krauss, *Studien*, 77–86.

[20] Neubauer, "The Jews in Southern Italy," pp. 613–14; Starr, *JBE*, 131 and notes, translates the same text, but his version counts " … more than *one hundred* communities" (emphasis added); cf. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, 68 (Heb.), 93 (Eng.); there, Ibn Da'ud mentions communities "… on all the islands of the Greek Sea … as far as Constantinople and Byzantium." Cohen addresses the genuine difficulty in pinpointing some of Ibn Da'ud's references, although they clearly refer to places in the Byzantine Empire.

BYZANTINE JEWS OUTSIDE THE EMPIRE: FROM THE RISE OF ISLAM TO THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

Prior to the Macedonian expansion, the Christian Empire withstood constant and damaging attacks from the Arabs, who made progress not only in Arabia and Syria-Palestine, but also in Mesopotamia, North Africa and on the Mediterranean islands of Crete, Cyprus, Sicily and Rhodes. With the expanding caliphate came a new, Muslim model for Jewish relations to temporal governments – one in which the Jews' condition was burdened by ideological rivalry but less so than it was in the face of Christianity's directly competing religious claims. Meanwhile, the Byzantine Empire fought for its very survival, undergoing a siege of the capital and experiencing a profound ideological breach which shook the foundations of its faith.[21] Concurrently (and key to the Jews' calculation to emigrate from the empire) cities, the economic centers of Jewish activity, entered a period of decline.[22] As if these conditions were not sufficient for the Byzantine Jews to question their residence in the empire, the period from the seventh to tenth centuries witnessed no less than four major, organized and state-sponsored persecutions.

As a result of all of these developments, the Byzantine Empire lost a significant portion of its Jewry. Most of these communities simply fell to the Arabs as the result of conquest; others fled the persecutions; and perhaps a certain measure of migration to Jerusalem or Palestine may be presumed. The enduring message of the period however, appears counter-intuitive at first glance. Persecution *alone*, despite its terrible associations, does not account for this significant and continuous Jewish emigration. No single event or policy but rather a confluence of social and political factors ultimately resulted in this consistent drain of Jews from the Byzantine Empire between the seventh and tenth centuries. And although difficult to document, the economic element must also be presumed to count among the significant causes of that emigration.[23] Indubitably, the economic *result* of that same population shift was profound; this dispersion of the Greek-speaking Jews laid the foundation for their economic and cultural network throughout the region and over the entire middle Byzantine period.

[21] For a political and social history of the seventh to tenth centuries, see G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford, 1956).

[22] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 1–11.

[23] R. S. Lopez, "The Role of Trade in the Economic Readjustment of Byzantium in the Seventh Century," *DOP* 13 (1959), 70, speaks to the question of general demography in the economics of the seventh century.

The process began with the reign of Heraclius and the military and political cataclysms that accompanied it. Deemed a watershed and historiographically marking the beginning of the Middle Byzantine period, the seventh century also witnessed the first major persecution of the Jews since Hadrian. Still, these patterns of Jewish migration do not appear to have taken place in direct response to Heraclius' grave anti-Jewish policies.[24] As far as population estimates are concerned, the most recent scholarship, taking into account other sources beyond Benjamin, favors the higher end of the spectrum, even after the persecution took hold.[25] Apparently, Jews even remained in the capital during the persecution, a fact which a contemporary polemical tract, *Doctrina Jacobi*, suggests quite strongly.[26] This particular forced conversion and concomitant violence, terrible and precedent-setting though they were, did not plunge the Byzantine Jews as a whole into panic. The Jews of North Africa suffered forced conversion and the Jews of Jerusalem were expelled, but the Jews of the Byzantine heartland appear to have bided their time, for many factors still kept them in place.

The importance of Heraclius' seventh-century persecution lies, from a demographic point of view, not in its immediate result, but rather in the precedent that it set.[27] Future emperors did not invoke Heraclius' policies

[24] According to Eutychius, Patriarch of Alexandria, *Annali*, trans. B. Pirone, Studia Orientalia Christiana, *Monographiae* 1 (Cairo, 1987), 203–4 (= Eutychius, *Annales*, PG 111, col. 1012, §465). According to this account, Constantine I expelled the Jews from the Holy City; those who converted to Christianity were tested by the consumption of pork. The whole passage seems to be an artifice, set up to allow Eutychius to make a doctrinal point about the allowance of pork in Christianity. According to Avi-Yonah, this so-called expulsion was simply the enforcement and softening of Hadrian's original decree of expulsion; he claims that it "did not effect a revolutionary change in the status of the Jews." Avi-Yonah, *The Jews*, 163–4.

[25] Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 54, 60, 72, nn. 5 and 8, follows Baron, *History*, III, 322–3, in favoring the 100,000 figure. For the antiquity (and presumed continuity) of Jewish populations in Asia Minor, see A. Reinach, "Noé Sangariou: étude sur le déluge en Phrygie et le syncrétisme judéo-phrygien," *REJ* 65 (1913): 214–16, 236; Reinach includes, as part of his theory of the tradition of Noah's Ark in Asia Minor, citations in which Jews are mentioned in Late Antiquity. See also Ankori, *Karaites*, 113–19; for Rhodes, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), vol. I, 345, secs. 8–11, in which the chronicler recounts the famous story of the Edessan Jewish merchant who bought the scrap of the Colossus of Rhodes. For Cyprus, see C. Roth, "The Jews in Cyprus" (Heb.), *Sefunot* 8 (1964): 285–7 and Leontius' anti-Jewish polemics in his oration in the second Council of Nicaea (787), in G. D. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Graz, 1960), vol. XIII, cols. 44–53; for Cappadocia, see Starr, *JBE*, 89, who translates a passage from the anonymous tract *Les trophées de Damas*, ed. G. Bardy (Paris, 1920) (= PO 15 [1927]), 234, which hails from the late seventh century.

[26] Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 56–7, 72, n. 12. In addition to the evidence from the *Doctrina Jacobi* below, n. 34, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, I, 301, for Palestinian Jews before the persecution, and pp. 328–9 after the reconquest. Also regarding Heraclius' persecution of the Jews, see Eutychius, *Annali*, trans. Pirone, 323–4 (= *Annales*, PG 111, cols. 1089–91).

[27] D. Jacoby, "The Jews of Constantinople and Their Demographic Hinterland," *Constantinople and Its Hinterland: Papers from the Twenty-Seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Oxford, April 1993*, ed. C. Mango and G. Dagron (London, 1995), 222–3: "We have no precise indications about the

as justification for the conversion or expulsion of Jews. In other words, the seventh-century persecution did not set formal precedent; rather the shape and consciousness of the empire, in both political and religious terms, shifted with the rise of Islam. In each of the following three centuries, Byzantine Jewry would face forced conversions of the type typically associated with medieval Western Europe, and in each of these cases some segment of the Jewish population would leave the empire.[28] In that context, Heraclius' persecution of the Jews changed the political vocabulary of their interaction. In a general sense, he opened the door for a violent expression of religious conflict that had remained basically latent until then. In the meantime, even Heraclius' act of violent persecution had only a muted effect on contemporary patterns of Jewish population and migration.[29] Regarding the seventh century, six cases potentially indicate that any emigration took place due to persecution. In fact, however, of these six cases only two truly indicate, with unalloyed clarity, any emigration at all.

The twelfth-century testimony of the German-Jewish traveler, Petahyah of Regensburg, provides the most dubious case. He describes the depopulated Jewish community of Armenia in which only a few Jews remain by his time; Petaḥyah relates, citing an unnamed source, that "in ancient times many Jews lived there. However, they slew one another and separated and went to the cities of Banel, Media, and Persia."[30] This passage could conceivably refer to the persecution of Heraclius, but it could just as easily refer to another, later or unknown chapter of local Jewish history. As a result, it offers little orientation whatsoever.

The second source, the *Doctrina Jacobi*, raises more interesting problems, chief among them that of genre. The *Doctrina* purports to recount the story of the perfidious Jacob who repents and converts to Christianity. Its value as a source lies in the modern assumption that the *Doctrina*'s author betrays, in his offhand and unguarded moments, societal context that reflects an accurate or, at the very least, a plausible historical setting. Thus, when the *Doctrina* indicates that in Africa "the Jews were found to be forcibly

demographic impact of the measures decreed against the Jews by Heraclius in 630–2, Leo III in 721–2, Basil I in 873–4, and his son Leo VI, after 886." Jacoby concurs, however, on the overarching pattern of emigration after c. 630.

[28] In the eighth century, by Leo III; in the ninth century, by Basil I; and in the tenth century, by Romanus Lecapenus.

[29] A. Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," *BZ* 48 (1955): 110, remarks that "there were Jews in other parts of the empire who seem to have been left undisturbed …" He goes on to cite southern Italy, Sicily and Constantinople as examples. He claims stability in southern Italy on the strength of Starr's discussion of the farmers in *JBE*, 27ff.

[30] Petahyah of Regensburg, "Sibbuv," *Osar Masa'ot*, ed. J. D. Eisenstein (New York, 1926), 50.

baptized, and in order not to be baptized [himself, upon his arrival there, Jacob] made himself appear Christian," it places Jacob's subterfuge in credible historical context.[31] Fortunately, the third source, another ecumenical account, presents the persecution of the Jews of North Africa in starker light, but basically supports the historical picture painted by the *Doctrina*. Georgios, the eparch of the region of Carthage, is supposed to have "made Christians of all the Jews and Samaritans throughout Africa, both natives and immigrants, with their wives, children and servants, numbering myriads of souls."[32] This description seems to obviate the challenge inherent in the

[31] *Doctrina Jacobi*, ed. V. Déroche and comm. G. Dagron, *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 217, V.20.30–40. This part of the Greek text occurs in the epilogue, added by the copyist and apparently a recasting of the original prologue (see below, n. 33), which is now lost to the Greek. As over against the extant Greek epilogue, Déroche (p. 57) deems the Slavic version of the same epilogue to be the most faithful to the prologue on which it is modeled. Against Déroche and Dagron, who place the writing of the *Doctrina* in the year 634, P. Speck, *Beiträge zur Thema, Byzantinische Feindseligkeit gegen die Juden im frühen siebten Jahrhundert*, Poikila Byzantina 14 (Bonn, 1997), argues that the *Doctrina* is a composite writing, dating to the eighth century (see below, n. 32).

[32] J. Starr, "St. Maximos and the Forced Baptism at Carthage in 632," *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 16 (1940): 194–5.

The historicity of the *Doctrina*, especially regarding the forced conversion of the Jews of North Africa under Heraclius, is presently under heated debate, although a decidedly lopsided one. On the one hand Paul Speck, *Byzantinische Feindseligkeit*, 267–467, claims that the *Doctrina* is not a unitary composition from the seventh century, but rather a composite from the eighth; moreover, he believes that the persecution itself is made up. On the other hand, Andreas Külzer's "Review of *Byzantinische Feindseligkeit* by Paul Speck," *BZ* 91 (1998): 583–6, brings all of Speck's assumptions and methods into doubt. Külzer recognizes the legitimately complex textual transmission of the polemic (already completely mapped out by Déroche, in his introduction to the *Doctrina*) in his *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, Byzantinisches Archiv 18 (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1999), 142–7. Külzer, however, does not subscribe to Speck's lone theory of the *Doctrina*'s falsity, and in his brief overview of the content of the *Doctrina* in *Disputationes Graecae*, he justifiably views the *Doctrina* as a window onto the contemporary reality of the early seventh century, even if the characters themselves are fictional (p. 147). Dagron, *Doctrina*, 18, 22–32, similarly accepts its usefulness as an historical source.

The argument against the historicity of Heraclius' forced conversion can be found in Speck, *Byzantinische Feindseligkeit*, 442–67, where he attempts to disqualify St. Maximos as an historical source for the conversion. Beginning with the fact that some MSS of Maximos do not contain the story, Speck goes on to work out a series of conditions under which the entire episode could be a legend added to the body of the text, though he grants that he cannot prove it (p. 443). In addition, he tries to downplay, as Külzer notes in his review (p. 584), the fact that the Jews had given sufficient reason for Heraclius to doubt their loyalty. Speck claims that the Jews did not support the Persians against the Byzantine state, but simply that they joined the ranks of the Persians on the route of their campaign, as many Christians had done (p. 475). In all of this, Speck takes on an apologetic tone, as if to defend the Jews from the accusations of medieval Christian authors, who charge that the Jews welcomed the Persians and engaged in violence against the Christians: "In particular, all the attacks against the Jews – that they opened the city gates to the Persians, and that they plundered and murdered Christians – are best seen as not being the case" (p. 474). In fact, the overwhelming textual and circumstantial evidence points to both the Jews' support of the Persians and the forced conversion which sprang, directly or otherwise, from it. To the point is Dagron's lucid and well-documented historical analysis of the *Doctrina*, 22–32. Most recently, Speck has argued for the falsity of the Heraclian persecution in his review of *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos* by A. Külzer, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 50 (2000): 342.

genre and tone of the *Doctrina*, by corroborating the state of Roman North Africa as relates to professing Jews.

As relates to the absence of Judaism, both the *Doctrina* and Georgios emphasize two key points of relevance to demography. First, they locate events specifically and uniquely to North Africa. Second, the language of forced conversion indicates that the Jews did not emigrate in the face of this threat. The introduction to the *Doctrina* describes how the Jews may not have had time to emigrate, finding themselves taken by surprise by the emperor's policy:

> And when Georgios, who was the Eparch, arrived in Africa, he ordered us, the leading Jews, to come together before him. When we had come together before him, he said to us: "Are you the servants of the Emperor?" And we replied saying: "Yes, sir, we are the servants of the Emperor!" Then he said: "The gracious ruler has ordered you to be baptized." … "We shall do no such thing, for this is not the time for the holy baptism." … We were, however, petrified with fear. Then he ordered us baptized. And we were baptized, willingly or not.[33]

Crudely put, North Africa ceased to be home to Jews, not because they fled but rather because they ceased to be counted as Jews. They were quickly and forcibly baptized, perhaps hoping to weather the storm in anticipation of a westward Muslim expansion.

Most remarkably of all, the ferocity of the persecution did not reach the capital. Even as it clearly refers to the utter totality of the conversion in North Africa, the *Doctrina* depicts Jacob as a professing Jew, dealing openly in Constantinople. When Jacob undertakes to sell the textiles of his rich, Christian acquaintance, he openly swears as a Jew, "by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," to uphold his end of the bargain.[34] One is hard pressed to imagine that Heraclius overlooked his own capital. Rather, it seems most likely that the emperor, seeking to maintain unity in his weakened empire, targeted those lands which he considered most vulnerable to sedition, namely, the Holy Land and North Africa.[35]

The fourth report comes from Theophanes, who describes the Jews' expulsion from Jerusalem. Theophanes' mention of the Jerusalem decree

[33] Translated by J. Starr, "St. Maximos and the Forced Baptism," 192–6. This prologue does not exist in the Greek version, but is translated and added to the edition of the *Doctrina Iacobi nuper Baptizati*, ed. N. Bonwetsch, *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* 12 (1910), 1–2. This excerpt corresponds to Déroche's edition of the *Doctrina*, 71–2. In the same edition, 51–2, 56–7, the editor addresses the role of the Ethiopic and Arabic recensions within the textual transmission of the *Doctrina*, and considers the text published above by Starr to be the oldest of the Arabic/Ethiopic recension and, as such, a legitimate part of the original text.

[34] *Doctrina*, 216–17, V.20.23–7. [35] Ankori, *Encounter*, 97–101.

specifically points to the political symbolism of punishing the Jews for their having previously handed the city over to the Persians. Theophanes sets the scene as Heraclius restores the True Cross to Jerusalem in the year 630, at which point he faces off with an inimical Jew, whom he "condemned, and asked, 'For what reason did you mistreat the Christians?' [The Jew] said, 'Because they are enemies of my faith.'" In retaliation, after restoring Christian authority to Jerusalem, the emperor "banished the Jews from the Holy City, having denied them permission to approach within three miles of the Holy City."[36] Theophanes' account, though silent on the matter of the Jews elsewhere in the empire, may extend the account of the *Doctrina Jacobi* to the trials of the Jews in the Holy Land.[37] Even so, Theophanes does not imply a large-scale Jewish migration, but rather describes a pinpointed expulsion from the highly symbolic and strategic city of Jerusalem.

The fifth source, Sebeos, wrote in the mid-seventh century, and therefore benefits from close proximity to the events; perhaps he even interviewed Armenian troops who participated in the battles of the day.[38] In his account the Jews do not escape from persecution but ally themselves with Arabs in the face of Heraclius' advance. Sebeos claims that

> the twelve tribes of all the clans of the Jews went and gathered at the city of Edessa. When they saw that the Persian army had departed and had left the city in peace, they shut the gate and fortified themselves within. They did not allow the army of the Roman Empire to enter among them. Then the Greek king Heraclius ordered it to be besieged. When they realized that they were unable to resist him in battle, they parleyed for peace with him. Opening the gates of the city, they went and stood before him. Then he ordered them to go and remain in each one's habitation, and they departed. Taking desert roads, they went to Tachkastan, to the sons of Ishmael, summoned them to their aid and informed them of their blood relationship through the testament of scripture. But although the latter were persuaded of their close relationship, yet they were unable to bring about agreement within their great number, because their cults were divided from each other.[39]

[36] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, I, 328–9.

[37] See above, n. 32, for P. Speck's puzzling defense of the Jews.

[38] See M. K. Krikorian, "Sebeos, Historian of the Seventh Century," in *Classical Armenian Culture: Influences and Creativity*, ed. T. Samuelian (Chico, 1982), 65, and, in the same volume, Z. Arzoumanian, "A Critique of Sebeos and his *History of Heraclius*, a Seventh-Century Armenian Document," 74. The most recent translation, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, trans. R. W. Thomson and comm. J. Howard-Johnston (Liverpool, 1999), outlines the written sources (pp. lxv–lxx), places Sebeos roughly contemporary to the events (pp. xxxviii–xxxix), and concludes that the history is reliable (p. lxxiv).

[39] *Armenian History*, 95. On p. 239, Howard-Johnston explains that this event took place between the summer of 629 and the summer of 630. See R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* (Princeton, 1997), 129, who points out the biblical resonances in Sebeos, such as this anachronistic reference to the twelve tribes of Israel.

From this passage, Andrew Sharf unduly concludes that, "as a result of [Heraclius'] persecution many Palestinian Jews fled to the advancing Arabs …"[40] The testimony, however, does not warrant Sharf's inference, because the fact of the siege, combined with the prior escape of the Persians, renders the account one of refugees from war – not victims of persecution. Moreover, the origin of the Jews in Sebeos' report is decidedly vague. At most, if Heraclius began to turn against the Jews in 630 when he made his way back to Jerusalem, and if he ultimately imposed mass conversion in 632, then the persecution may have influenced Sebeos' account, which does reflect some emigration, even if only of a military nature.[41]

The sixth and final source, the twelfth-century Patriarch of Antioch, Michael the Syrian, writes of Jewish flight in unambiguous terms. In his version, Michael echoes Sebeos and, more importantly, expands on his account and links it to Heraclius' persecution. Michael describes the forced conversion throughout the empire, and adds that, in the year 634, on account of that conversion "the Jews fled from the lands of the Romans; they came first off to Edessa and, having once again been abused there, they fled to Persia." Michael dryly notes, as if an afterthought, that "a large number of them received baptism and became Christians."[42]

Michael's text poses various problems. First, the sheer length of time between the events and the author renders it a weak source; Michael writes almost 500 years after the events he relates. Second, Michael claims that the Jews in all the lands of the empire were forcibly converted. Theophanes does not even imply so much, and the *Doctrina Jacobi* contradicts this assertion, insofar as the Jews of Constantinople continued to live openly. Third, his recounting of the events at Edessa appears to rely on, and perhaps exaggerate, Sebeos' version. Finally, Michael leaves unclear the magnitude of the emigration, despite his implication of great numbers. Balancing the lucidity of his account with the inherent problems in it, one might conclude that Jews did indeed flee, as one would naturally expect under such conditions.

[40] Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," 110.

[41] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, I, 328; Starr, "St. Maximos and the Forced Conversion," p. 193; both are discussed in historical and literary context of the *Doctrina*, in G. Dagron's commentary, 30–1.

[42] *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot (Paris, 1910), vol. II, 414. R. Hoyland, "Sebeos, the Jews and the Rise of Islam," *Studies in Muslim–Jewish Relations* 2 (1996): 90, points out that, if Michael's version of the flight to Edessa is related to that of Sebeos (which took place between 629 and 630) then there is a four-year discrepancy, since Michael's story takes place in 634. Hoyland supposes that Sebeos probably confused the dates. One wonders, however, if it is not Michael who does so. Sebeos' proximity to the events, despite the patently Biblical imagery of the twelve tribes (see *Armenian History*, xlix–lii), gives him credibility. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 55, n. 6, also links this passage to the *Doctrina*.

However, his account, due to those difficulties, does not bear the historical weight of Theophanes, Sebeos or, for that matter, of other accounts regarding later persecutions under Leo III (r. 717–41) and Romanus Lecapenus (r. 920–44).

More significant than emigration, the mere fact of forced conversion seems to have accounted for the principal loss in Jewish population under Heraclius. Beyond being expelled from Jerusalem (which does not prove emigration from the empire altogether) and fleeing from Edessa, the only evidence for Jewish emigration comes from the problematic Michael.[43] In later centuries, the persecutions under Romanus Lecapenus and, to a lesser degree under Leo III, would chip away at the Jewish population with better-documented migrations. In the seventh century, however, the number of Jews in Byzantine territory dropped primarily thanks to both forced baptism and the Arab conquest which superseded it, and only secondarily due to expulsion and flight.

If flight from Palestine contributed to emigration prior to the Muslim Conquest, travel to the same place also drained Byzantine Jewry, once the Muslims conquered the Levant. Constantly in the background, the perennial attraction of Jerusalem must have resulted in at least some pious migration to the Holy Land, where a large Jewish community continued to live in Galilee. Under the new and comparatively tolerant rule of the Arabs, Jerusalem's accessibility reinvigorated the Holy City's claim on the Jewish imagination. Along these lines, Jacob Mann asserts, somewhat speculatively, that "soon after the Arab conquest, Jerusalem attracted a number of Jews as permanent settlers, and much larger numbers of visitors and pilgrims."[44] One rabbinic responsum in particular, dated from within perhaps two generations of Heraclius, influenced Mann's opinion; it describes a series of different types of Jewish communities, including perhaps a presumably well-established Byzantine synagogue in Muslim Palestine.[45] Although the identification of

[43] Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," 110, summarizes the experience under Heraclius: "When Palestine and Syria had fallen to the Arabs, the Jews who had suffered most ceased to be imperial subjects." G. Dagron and V. Déroche, "Juifs et chrétiens dans l'orient du VIIe siècle," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 32, disagree. Dagron places more weight on the first half of Michael's account as reflecting large migration.

[44] Mann, *Jews*, I, 45.

[45] T-S Loan 97, fol. 2r, ll. 20ff:

> To this day, in the Land of Israel, they do not recite the *Qadosh* [i.e., the *Qedushah*] and *Shema'* except on the Sabbath or Holidays – only in the morning service and only outside of Jerusalem and in any town in which there are [followers of the] Babylonian [tradition], for they fought and caused strife until [those towns in which they lived] accepted it upon themselves to recite the *Qadosh* and *Shema'* daily. However, in the rest of the towns and cities in the Land of Israel, in which there are no Babylonian [adherents], they only recite the *Qadosh* on the Sabbath and Holidays.

the synagogue as a Byzantine one is far from certain, Mann's broad conclusion about immigration to Palestine benefits from the fact that, to some degree, one can always assume that Jerusalem and the Land of Israel attracted Jewish settlers from abroad.[46] Still, whether or not this ongoing commitment to Jerusalem actually resulted in any significant migration to newly Muslim Palestine must remain an open question.

If indeed the reign of Heraclius did not inspire migration of the magnitude one might expect, it demands explanation. Here one can only speculate, but it does appear that, despite the indisputable violence of Heraclius, the social conditions of seventh-century Byzantium discouraged mass exodus the likes of which the persecution of Romanus Lecapenus would inspire two centuries later.[47] Andrew Sharf argues that "a measure of social integration, expressed in various ways, remained a basic characteristic of Byzantine Jewry"; as evidence, he cites the relationship between the Jews and heretics in ninth-century Phrygia as evincing "the absence of a social barrier between the two communities – which need not by any means imply uniformly friendly relations."[48] The Continuation of Theophanes here explains how "every initiate [into the Phrygian heresy] procured for himself as a teacher and guide a Hebrew man or woman."[49] Admittedly, a relationship with hinterland heretics hardly counts as integration into Byzantine society; in addition, the total absence of professing Jews in North Africa, as described in the *Doctrina Jacobi*, also vitiates any claim to wholesale integration.

This was decreed by the eminent Yehudai Gaon, c. 760. See J. Mann, "The Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim as a source of Jewish History," *JQR*, NS 7 (1916): 474, citing L. Ginzberg, *Geonica* (New York, 1909), vol. II, 52.

Mann, "The Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim," 474, cites the contemporary Willibald (c. 765), who describes Tiberias, where "sunt multae ecclesiae et synagogae Iudaeorum," presumably indicating a pluralistic Jewish community. However, the standard edition of Willibald's itinerary, "Hodoeporicon Sancti Willibaldi," in *Itinera Hierosolymitana*, ed. T. Tobler and A. Molinier (Paris, 1879), 261, does not have "*synagogae*," but rather the singular "*synagoga*," and, what is more, there appear to be no textual variants for this word among the MSS. Nonetheless, it is difficult to conceive of eighth-century Tiberias as having only one synagogue. Though the responsum of Yehudai Gaon, above, does not mention Tiberias explicitly as one of the cities with competing rites, it was a principal seat of Jewish learning and no doubt home to at least one synagogue of the Babylonian rite and another of the Palestinian.

[46] For consideration of the apocalyptic expectations particular to the time, which may have augmented such migration, see Hoyland, "Sebeos," 91–2, 97. More generically, consider the travels of Isaiah of Trani, the great thirteenth-century, Byzantine-Italian sage who "traveled from Acco and walked from the West to the East, traversing the entire Land of Israel," quoted from Isaiah the Elder of Trani, *Teshuvot ha-Rid*, ed. A. J. Wertheimer (Jerusalem, 1967), 531–2, no. 123, by I. Ta-Shma, "R. Jesaiah di Trani the Elder and His Connections with Byzantium and Palestine" (Heb.), in *Shalem*, vol. IV (Jerusalem, 1984), 410.

[47] See below, pp. 48–9. [48] A. Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," 63.

[49] *Scriptores post Theophanem*, ed. F. Combefis, PG 109 (Paris 1863), col. 56d, translated in Starr, *JBE*, 98–9.

Nevertheless, the Jews undoubtedly fit into a complicated but somewhat settled ethnic balance within the Byzantine Empire of the seventh century, such that they found sufficient grounds to weather the storm.[50] Perhaps the fact that Heraclius only acted against the Jews in the face of that which he deemed traitorous, i.e., their support of the Persian capture of Jerusalem, indicates that the Jews were sufficiently integrated to avoid random attacks.[51]

At least as significant as the position of the Jews within the social makeup of the empire, their legal status also stabilized their relationship to the government.[52] Time and again, throughout the early Byzantine period, even as the emperors tried to control all the non-Orthodox elements in society, the Jews were able to resist these incursions by invoking ancient prerogatives.[53] It took the Byzantine emperors over two hundred years and the zealous power of Justinian I to effectively undermine those time-honored rights. Even then, the Jews saw themselves as rightful members of a society governed by the rule of law.[54] Consequently, even when shaken by the persecutory attacks of the early seventh century, the Jews of Byzantium did not simply pack up and leave.

Political forces also may have contributed to the choice not to emigrate, though no hard evidence to this effect has survived. Joshua Starr surmises that "the fear of Heraclius lest the Jews and Samaritans make common cause with the threatening Arab hordes still seems to me the most plausible explanation" for the persecution.[55] In other words, the Muslim–Jewish

[50] Ankori, *Encounter*, 101.

[51] Starr, "St. Maximos and the Forced Baptism," 196; Starr, "Byzantine Jewry on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (565–638)," *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 15 (1935): 280–93. The Jews were not afraid to join the mob during the political instability which followed the death of Heraclius' son, as recounted by Nicephorus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, in his *Short History*, ed. and trans. C. Mango (Washington, D.C., 1990), 82–3, chap. 31, where the Jews participated in the vandalization of a church. The Quinisext Council's (692) ban on eating unleavened bread with and accepting medicine from the Jews better proves Sharf's point of social integration, see Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum*, vol. XI, col. 945, sec. 11; Starr, *JBE*, 89. For the relationship between the physician Shabbetai Donnolo and St. Nilo, see C. Colafemmina, *Per la storia degli Ebrei di Calabria* (Soveria Manelli, 1996), 1–10, and A. Sharf, "Shabbetai Donnolo as a Byzantine Jew," in *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium*, 160–78. For the participation of the Jews in the general mob, see Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abu'l Faraj*, trans. E. Budge, 2 vols. (London, 1932), 227.

[52] Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 58; Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," 112.

[53] *CTh*, 16.8 passim; J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'empire romain* (Paris, 1914), vol. I, 176–9. It is worthy of note that these rights and privileges predate, and exist independently of, the highly contentious historical question of Jewish citizenship, which enters the historical narrative with Caracalla in 212; see Avi-Yonah, *The Jews*, 46, and, regarding the Christian efforts to deal with (and weaken) this status, 159–64.

[54] A. Rabello, *Giustiniano, Ebrei e Samaritani* (Milan, 1987–8), vol. II, 801–5.

[55] Starr, "St. Maximos and the Forced Baptism" 196. V. Colorni, "Gli Ebrei nei territori italiani a Nord di Roma dal 568 agli inizi del secolo XIII," in *Gli Ebrei nell'alto Medioevo*, Settimane di studio 26 (Spoleto, 1980), 243–4, follows the language of Heraclius' legate to Dagobert, in which the emperor

common cause that inspired Heraclius' fear and reactive repression was well founded. If so, that same common cause also prompted the Jews, ironically, to endure the forced baptisms, in order to wait and see the results of the Arab conquest. Perhaps they even actively supported the Arabs as they had the Persians. If such was the Jews' calculation, then it proved to have been a sound one, for precisely those who bore the brunt of the persecution, namely, those in Palestine and North Africa, soon saw the permanent victory of Islam.[56]

Finally, the spotty nature of the persecution itself may have encouraged Jews to doubt its permanence. Even Jerusalem, which suffered the consequences of Heraclius' personal anger, did not so completely rid itself of Jews as had North Africa. A responsum from R. Yehudai, Gaon of the Baghdadi academy of Sura, dating to the eighth century, may offer a Jewish perspective on the anti-Jewish decree in Palestine:

> Thus said Yehudai of blessed memory: "They [i.e., the Romans] decreed apostasy[57] on the Children of Israel, to the effect that they not read the statement of the faith [i.e., the *Shema'*] and that they should not pray, but that [the authorities] allowed them to congregate for the Sabbath morning service … Indeed they would recite on the Sabbath morning [the essential prayers] … and now that the Holy One, Blessed be He, has ended the reign of Rome and rescinded her decrees, and [now that] the Ishmaelites have come, they allowed them to engage in Torah."[58]

Though the historical references prior to the Muslim conquest defy clear identification, the flow of Yehudai's argument certainly allows the possibility that the persecution in question immediately predates the Islamic

describes how he has converted all the Jews of his realm and simultaneously requests that Dagobert, too, convert all the Jews living among the Franks. Heraclius explains his actions as a preemptive strike, because he "Ignorabat unde haec calamitas contra emperium surgerit." One cannot help but question the form of "surgerit." Is it a mistaken or medieval form of the perfect subjunctive (properly *surrexerit*) or a simple vowel change from the imperfect subjunctive (properly *surgeret*)? If future perfect, the action takes on a preemptive quality against future action, and if imperfect, it represents a reprisal for a past action.

[56] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 526–31, argues this point, bolstered by the evidence from the *Doctrina*, V.17.212–13.

[57] The root שמד literally means "destruction," but in medieval Hebrew, it means "apostasy."

[58] T-S Loan 97, fol. 1r–1v, in Mann, "The Responsa of the Geonim," 473, n. 17, referring to L. Ginzberg, *Geonica*, II, 50–1, who argues on p. 48 that this copy was written in tenth-century Palestine, while Mann, "Responsa," 473, does not necessarily assign it to that country. On Yehudai Gaon, who flourished around 760, see L. Ginzberg, *Ginze Schechter*, vol. II, 551–2, 561–2. Parallel passages in Geonic literature, also compiled by Ginzberg, indicate a multi-generational tradition. Ginzberg, *Ginze Schechter*, II, 143, gives a version of Yehudai's responsa as copied by his student, Pirqoi, T-S 36.109. In it, Pirqoi decrees a leniency applicable during times of persecution, whereby one may copy a Torah scroll on parchment previously used for pagan purposes. The rationale behind this is that "evil Rome forcibly converted [those in] the Land of Israel, [decreeing that] they not read from the scroll of the Torah, so they hid away all the Torah scrolls, for they were burning them. So, when the Muslims came, there were no longer Torah Scrolls."

conquest, thereby placing it in the reign of Heraclius.[59] If so, its version of this chapter in history recounts a situation less grave than that described by Theophanes, and decidedly softens the impression left by other sources, such as Michael. Specifically, it seems to indicate that the Jews were able to maintain cohesion by virtue of their permission to congregate on Saturday, even if outward manifestations of particularistic Jewishness, such as the emblematic *Shema'*, may have been outlawed. Additionally, it clearly presumes an opportunity for Jews to return to their ancestral faith at a later date. Though Yehudai's responsum comes a century after the events it describes (if indeed it applies to Heraclius' persecution), it seems to present a relatively specific version of events without hyperbole, qualifying the totality of the forced conversion in North Africa and accentuating the inconsistency, or lack of depth, of Heraclius' policies among the people and the Church.[60]

In effect, a combination of factors mitigated the force of the persecution with respect to Jewish flight. Certainly, the forced conversion of many Jews, particularly in North Africa, decreased their numbers in the empire, and equally certain is the fact that many must have fled. The conditions within the empire, however, encouraged a surprisingly mild reaction. In demographic terms, the entire picture of emigration is overshadowed by the fact that the great bulk of the Jews who left the Byzantine realm did not leave at all; Islam simply engulfed them.[61] Meanwhile, significant numbers of Jews remained in the surviving Byzantine territory, including Anatolia, Greece and southern Italy.[62]

[59] Simonsohn, "Hebrew Revival," 842.

[60] G. Stemberger, "Zwangstaufen von Juden im 4. bis 7. Jahrhundert: Mythos oder Wirklichkeit?", in *Judentum – Ausblicke und Einsichten, FS Kurt Schubert*, Judentum und Umwelt 43, ed. C. Thoma, G. Stemberger and J. Maier (Frankfurt, 1993), 106–111, argues for the unevenness of Heraclius' persecution, doubting in particular the conversion in Palestine, though accepting St. Maximos' version of events in North Africa; cf. above, n. 26; Ankori, *Encounter*, 101–2.

[61] Ankori, *Encounter*, 101.

[62] Since the period between the sixth and eleventh centuries had lacked epigraphic evidence of Jews in these places, the epitaphs from Venosa, Italy provide invaluable, frequently dated, inscriptions to help fill the gap (Venosa also boasts inscriptions from the period of the Late Roman Empire; for the dates of these earlier inscriptions, see G. I. Ascoli, *Iscrizioni inedite o mal note greche, latine, ebraiche di antichi sepolcri giudaici del Napolitano* (Turin and Rome, 1880), 45 (originally published in *Atti del IV Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti tenuto a Firenze, 1878* [Florence, 1880]) and H. J. Leon, "The Jews of Venusia," *JQR* 44 [1954], 284, who put the earlier group in the sixth century at the latest. Ascoli, *Iscrizioni*, 51–87, was the first to publish these inscriptions accessibly; his examples include inscriptions from Venosa, Oria, Taranto, Trani, Benevento, etc., later republished by Frey, *CII*, vol. I, 408–54. For a recent study and new readings of two epitaphs from Venosa, see D. Cassuto, "The Story of Two Epitaphs from the Ninth Century in Southern Italy" (Heb.), in *The Jews in Italy*, ed. U. Cassuto and H. Beinart (Jerusalem, 1988), 1–24. Cesare Colafemmina put together an extremely useful bibliography in *Italia judaica, Atti del I Convegno Internazionale* (Rome, 1983), 199–211.

Unlike the seventh-century events of the early Muslim Conquest, which shook the foundations of the Byzantine Empire in terms of territory and the regional balance of power, the eighth-century crisis of Iconoclasm rent Byzantine society ideologically from within, even as the siege of Constantinople and ongoing raids reaffirmed Muslim ascendancy from without. The Jews, otherwise removed from internal ecclesiastical matters, found themselves indirectly involved in the generations-long struggle between the proponents and opponents of the veneration of icons in Christian worship. Primarily, the iconodules accused the iconoclasts of Judaizing or conspiring with Jews, on account of the obvious ideological connections between Iconoclasm and Judaism with respect to images.[63] History has rightly judged these rhetorical attacks, though based on a logical connection, to be unfounded rhetorical devices meant to vilify their object.[64] Most notably, the persecution of Leo III counts as obvious proof that the Iconoclasts, though clearly aware of the internal consistency of the Jewish and Islamic avoidance of images, did not look kindly upon the Jews. The first iconoclastic emperor, Leo III attempted to convert Byzantine Jewry

[63] The Continuator of Theophanes attacked Michael II who came from Phrygian Amorion, where "a great number of of Jews and Athinganoi are settled. And another heresy has sprouted out from the company of [these] others and [from] the constant dealings [with them], which has its own tenor and doctrine, and to which [Michael] himself belongs, having been brought up in it by his parents." *Scriptores post Theophanem*, col. 56c. P. J. Alexander, "Religious Persecution and Resistance in the Byzantine Empire of the Eighth and Ninth Cenuries: Methods and Justifications," *Speculum* 52 (1977): 239, 245, brings the Athinganoi into the discussion of religious oppression during the iconoclastic crisis.

Iconoclasts are not alone in being accused of Jewish affiliations. The polemical *Doctrina* (pp. 128–31), describes how Jacob "gave the Christians, as Greens, over to the Blues and called them 'Jews' and 'mamzers'." It is interesting that Jacob later refers to himself as a Green who abused the Christian Blues, in the same *Doctrina*, 214–15, V.20.13ff. See below, n. 162. For the seminal work on the Jewish consciousness of the circus factions, see J. Perles' treatment of a Midrash on the Book of Esther, "Thron und Circus des Königs Salomo," *MGWJ* 21 (1872): 122–39. Perles sheds no light on whether or not the Jews associated with either party, because, if nothing else, he deals with a homiletical tradition in which there are, in fact, the four original colors, 123–8. Besides, as G. Dagron explains in his commentary on the *Doctrina*, 236, "Qu'il se déclare juif ou non, Jacob peut être Bleu ou Vert, Bleu et Vert alternativement." See also Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," 100–1.

[64] P. Crone, "Islam, Judeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980): 76–7 gives undue credence to polemical pseudo-histories from virulently Iconodulic sources, most notably Theophanes, who levelled charges of Jewish-mindedness against Leo III and Constantine V. Cf. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, I, 401, 501. Stephen Gero gives the lie to the cycle of tales woven into Theophanes' account of Leo III and the Jewish wizard. See Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, 59–84. Gero leaves little room for doubt; he concludes, on p. 83, "The detailed analysis of the sources indicates that none of the various reports about Jewish or Muslim iconoclastic influence on Leo is historically reliable … The Byzantine tradition is merely a classic example of the tendentious written and oral elaboration of legend." Gero's point does not contradict the underlying fact of the influence of Jewish and Muslim monotheism on Iconoclasm, such as the continuation of Theophanes touches on (see above, n. 63); it merely demonstrates that the literary flourishes which connect them are precisely that.

forcibly, which resulted in the flight of some significant number of Jews to the budding Jewish kingdom of the Khazars. Thus, for the first time, "The Jews began to come [to Khazaria] from Baghdad, from Khorasan, and from the land of Greece."[65] The eighth-century reign of Leo III therefore established a pattern of persecution, increasingly a motivating factor for the emigration of Byzantine Jews.[66] The magnitude of this emigration, however, cannot be determined. There are no relative or absolute points of comparison; the Khazarian Hebrew document that attests this flight must stand on its own. Further complicating the demographic shift described in that letter, the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 overturned not only Iconoclasm, but also the persecution of the Jews under it. As Zvi Ankori has aptly noted, it resolved not merely to allow the Jews to return to their religion, but actually demanded that Jews, rather than feigning Christianity, "ought to practice their religion openly."[67] Not only did the program of forcible baptism fail to convince Jews, but it also, perhaps more problematically, folded into Christain society an entire class of people predisposed to dissent. Once again, countervailing, simultaneous pressures to leave and to remain in the empire reveal the complexity of Byzantine-Jewish movement, even if the net impression is one of stagnancy or diminution.

Subsequently, the ninth century seems to point in the same direction, namely outward but in a comparably complex manner. For example, a single case of Jewish influx into the empire occurred, although it properly represents military vicissitudes rather than economic or social impulses. As part of the ongoing struggle for hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean, both the Byzantines and the Muslims raided each other's territory. On one

[65] T-S Misc. 35.38. N. Golb and O. Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents from the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, 1982), 110–11; S. Schechter, "An Unknown Khazar Document," *JQR* 3 (1912): 206, l. 36; Starr, *JBE*, 93, n. 13. The anonymous Khazarian letter fixes the flight from Greece and the more formalized conversion to Judaism to the period of Sabriel. By all accounts, both events took place in the eighth century; see D. M. Dunlop, *History of the Jewish Khazars* (Princeton, 1967), 91, following Judah Halevi. See also Alexander Gieysztor, "Les Juifs et leurs activités économiques en Europe orientale," in *Gli Ebrei nell'alto medioevo*, 497; Leo's persecution is also known from Theophanes, *Chronographia*, I, 401 and others.

Different opinions, however, compete regarding an account in al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-dhahab* [*Les Prairies d'Or*], ed. and Fr. trans. B. de Meynard and P. de Courteille (Paris, 1861–1917), vol. II, 8. Dunlop, *History of the Jewish Khazars*, 89–91, 177, reads al-Mas'udi's version with reference to the aforementioned persecution under Leo III. Meanwhile, Joshua Starr, *JBE*, 151–2, reads the same passage as referring to the reign of Romanus Lecapenus, in the tenth century. Agreeing with Starr is G. Vernadsky, "The Date of the Conversion of the Khazars to Judaism," *Byzantion* 14 (1940): 83–4. The different interpretations hinge on the syntax of a single phrase, which Starr and Dunlop read, and explain, quite differently.

[66] McCormick, *Origins*, 588.

[67] Ankori, *Encounter*, 105; Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum*, XIII, cols. 427–8.

such raid, the Byzantines attacked Egypt proper, sacking Damietta.[68] According to a Muslim source,

> When the Byzantines [*al-rum*] landed in at Damietta (May 22, 853) they slew a large number of Muslims in the town, while the women and children and the protected people (i.e., Jews and Christians) were carried away into captivity.[69]

One may reasonably assume that the captors then offered the Jews up for ransom to a community of coreligionists in a seaport or major hub in Byzantine territory, but the historical record is silent on the ultimate fate of these captives.

Notwithstanding this putative case of redemption in ninth-century Byzantium, serious pressures plagued the Jewish population in the late ninth century. Under the reign of Basil I the Jews underwent another well-attested, forced conversion. The *Chronicle of Ahima'az*, one of a number of sources for this systematic conversion, recounts the multi-generational history of a scholarly Byzantine-southern-Italian family.[70] Ahima'az b. Paltiel, the author, introduces Basil I as the one "who tried to turn the Jews from Torah." In so doing, the emperor sought to engage R. Shefatiah, one of the three patriarchs of the Ahima'az family, in a religious disputation. According to the family tale, Shefatiah defeated the emperor and miraculously saved the monarch's daughter from imminent death. Emboldened by his meritorious act, the rabbi requested of Basil that he spare the towns of southern Italy from his planned forced conversion. Incensed at the request,

[68] See al-Tabari, *Incipient Decline*, trans. J. Kraemer in *The History of al-Tabari* 34 (Albany, 1989), 124–6.

[69] Mann, *Jews*, I, 14; Mann quotes excerpts from *The Governors and Judges of Egypt of El Kindi*, ed. R. Guest (Leiden, 1912); the excerpts and commentary on the events are found in E. W. Brooks, "The Relations between the Empire and Egypt from a New Arabic Source," *BZ* 22 (1913): 390–1. The event is also portrayed by al-Tabari, *Incipient Decline*, 124–7. Al-Tabari does not mention Jews among the captives. Kraemer, in his notes on al-Tabari (p. 126, n. 421) cites Ahmad b. Ali Yaqub al-Yaqubi, *Tarikh (Historiae)*, ed. M. Th. Houtsma (Leiden, 1883), vol. II, 297, who does mention Jewish women explicitly.

[70] See Starr, *JBE*, 123–36. Starr arrived at his date for the conversion, 873–4, following G. Cozza-Luzi and B. Lagumina, *La cronaca siculo-saracena di Cambridge* (Palermo, 1890), 32, 130, which corresponds to Starr's source no. 61, p. 127. Ahima'az b. Paltiel himself places the event 800 years after the destruction of the Temple (M. Salzman, trans., *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz* [New York, 1924], 70, 8 [Heb.]), which is equivalent to the Christian year 868, according to the traditional Jewish counting from the Destruction of the Temple. D. Kaufmann, "Die Chronik des Achimaaz von Oria (850–1054)," *MGWJ* 40 (1896): 462ff., 496ff. and 520ff., gives a biography of the major characters. He also offers a linguistic and textual analysis of the chronicle. The article is most easily accessed in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt, 1915), vol. III, 1–55. There, on p. 14, Kaufmann establishes, after some tentative attempts by Zunz and Graetz before him, that the emperor mentioned in the chronicle, Basil, refers to none other than Basil I. It is Kaufmann, "Die Chronik," 15, who accepts the Chronicle at face value and places the event to the year 868. Most recently, see the chronological and literary considerations of Ahima'az ben Paltiel, *Sefer Yuḥasin: libro delle discendenze*, introd. and trans. C. Colafemmina (Cassano delle Murge, 2001), 31–8.

the emperor nonetheless partially acceded to his wish, sparing the rabbi's hometown of Oria.[71] Other Jewish and Christian sources confirm the essence of the persecution, despite the patently legendary story of Shefatiah's heroism.[72] Still, whether or not this particular series of events led directly to emigration remains a matter of speculation. As a matter of conversion, its demographic impact is mitigated in light of the subsequent return to Judaism under Leo VI, which highlights the impermanence of the persecution's effect, even if its violence remains undiminished.[73]

No doubt in light of this persecution and under the related assumption that Jews were leaving the empire, Jacob Mann characterizes the author of a homiletical tract called *Pesikta Rabbati* as "an Italian haggadist [i.e., homilist] who settled in Jerusalem in the first half of the ninth century, where he joined the 'mourners of Zion.'"[74] Mann establishes the date of *Pesikta Rabbati* to 845, based on the author's own comments; impatient for the Redemption, the homilist points out: "Behold, how much time has passed since the Temple was destroyed? … Now even 777 years."[75] That the redactor originally came from Byzantine southern Italy is a stylistic judgment regarding which Mann's contemporaries concur.[76] That the author

[71] Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 73, 8 (Heb.).

[72] For sources, see above, n. 70. In his commentary on a treatise of Gregory of Nicaea, "Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée sur le baptême des Juifs," ed. G. Dagron in *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 347f., Dagron comments on the possible economic reasons behind the forced conversion, surmising that "Les Juifs que l'empereur veut rallier, avec des méthodes moins coercitives, sont plutôt ceux de la capitale et des grandes villes, des commerçants ou artisans qui participaient à la reprise démographique et économique de l'Empire." Dagron arrives at this conclusion via the report of Constantine VII regarding his grandfather in *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB 33 (Bonn, 1838), 341–2, which complements that of Gregory of Nicaea (Dagron, "Le traité," 318–19, §3), in that both sources note the fiscal incentives for conversion. It is noteworthy, in addition, that Gregory of Nicaea's treatise provided much of the fodder for the debate on the presence or absence of a special Jewish tax; see below, chap. 4, n. 33. For brief overview, see Ankori, *Encounter*, 106–11, esp. 107, for the religious motives.

[73] Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 85–6, 15 (Heb.); see the famous "respite" (הנחה) of Leo from the "Vision of Daniel," as discussed in A. Sharf, "The Vision of Daniel as a Byzantine-Jewish Historical Source," in *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium* (Ramat-Gan, 1995), 130–5, especially p. 121; the tract is translated by Sharf in *Byzantine Jewry*, 201–4, and discussed in Ankori, *Encounter*, 111.

[74] Mann, *Jews*, I, 48, n. 2; Mann adduces proof from the text in which the medieval author rhetorically asks, "So, on account of what merit does Israel deserve all of this glory? On account of their merit of the settlement in the Land of Israel, where they sit and mourn among the nations of the world …" Mann suggests a subtext of social history: "It seems to me more natural to explain the passage [a description of the mourners of Zion], that in spite of altered circumstances and heavy taxation Israel persists in having a settlement in Palestine."

[75] Ibid.

[76] S. Eppenstein, "Beiträge zur Geschichte und Literatur im gaonäischen Zeitalter," *MGWJ* 55 (1911): 626. Eppenstein points out that Zunz thought the author originated in Greece proper, while others, including Eppenstein himself (p. 627), favored Byzantine Italy. Mann alone argues, on account of the internal evidence, that the author was a Byzantine Italian, further, who ended up in Palestine, see above, n. 74.

migrated to Palestine, Mann deduces by pointing out that the homilist defends the Jews' rightful claims to habitation in the Land of Israel.[77] This rather tortuous and heavily inferred claim has the benefit of agreeing with the bleakness of the of the ninth century thanks to Basil's forced baptism of the Jews, but the basic contours of the events as they relate to demographic shifts still leave much to be desired.

A more limited analysis might conclude that during the eighth and ninth centuries, in a fashion less decisive than the wholesale transfer of territory that accompanied the rise of Islam, net emigration emerges from an impressionistic review of the available sources. With the sole exception of the Hebrew account of flight under Leo III, no Theophanes or *Doctrina Jacobi* describes the precise nature of the depletion of Byzantine Jewry.[78] Compounded by contemporary Arab gains on Crete and Sicily, the picture of a continual, passive and active decline in Jewish numbers takes on a presumptive weight.[79] Thus, the confluence of events and the preponderant tone of their description in the sources lead to this conclusion, and in that context a subsequent, early-tenth-century persecution seems to book-end this period of Jewish emigration or decline.

The tenth century witnessed a turn of the tide in the regional politics of the eastern Mediterranean, together with important developments in the demography of Byzantine Jewry.[80] With the maturation of the

[77] See above, n. 74. [78] See above, n. 65, regarding al-Mas'udi.

[79] This is not to say that the events did not deeply scar the Jews. The resorting to messianic hopes is a measure of their desperation. See J. Starr, "Le mouvement messianique au début du VIIIe siècle," *REJ* 102/2 (1937): 81–92, who places (p. 86) the messianic movement immediately prior to the persecution. On p. 92, Starr follows Mann in speculating that it was the attack of the Arabs on Constantinople in the winter of 717–18 that may have inspired these hopes. Surely, however, the positive anticipation of the Arabs, combined with the notable persecution of the Jews, heightened these feelings.

[80] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 56, schematizes the development of the Byzantine economy, characterizing the ninth–tenth centuries as the period of transition from the antique to medieval economy, which later takes off in the eleventh. Michael Hendy indicates much the same, and re-evaluates the eleventh and twelfth centuries as times of economic growth, especially in the commercial sectors; see above, n. 10.

A separate scholarly debate deals with the nature and timing of the *cultural* renaissance, as discussed by W. Treadgold, in his introduction to *Renaissances before the Renaissance* (Stanford, 1984). In that volume, in his chapter entitled "The Macedonian Renaissance," 75–99, Treadgold foreshadows his argument in *The Byzantine Revival* (Stanford, 1988), 39ff., 332, where he claims that the period between the accession of Irene as Regent (780) and the death of Theophilus (842) was the turning point in the fortunes of the empire. His opinion is not truly at odds with the traditional vision of the Macedonian Dynasty as the height of glory, as expressed by A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire 324–1453* (Madison, 1980), vol. I, 367: "The first [Macedonian] period was the most brilliant time of the political existence of the Empire …", and by Ostrogorsky, *History*, who entitles his chapter on the early Macedonians "The Golden Age of the Byzantine Empire." Treadgold merely pushes back his demarcation of the ascendancy.

Macedonian Dynasty in the persons of Romanus Lecapenus and his son-in-law Constantine VII, whom Romanus usurped and who later succeeded him, the Greeks engaged in a program of expansion which tilted the balance of power in their favor. Key victories on Crete and Cyprus in the 960s, as well as expansion in Syria-Palestine and Mesopotamia, heralded this shift.[81] Meanwhile, the Abbasid Caliphate diminished in power, increasingly pressured by the Turks to the east and the Fatimids to the west.[82]

Just as the geopolitics adjusted the balance of power, so too, did the pattern of Jewish settlement. However, one last crisis, the gravest of them all, pushed the Jews out of the empire before the gradual improvements of the late tenth century eventually drew them back to it. Notably, Muslim, Jewish and Christian sources all attest the violent persecution at the hands of Romanus Lecapenus, which took place around the fourth decade of the tenth century.[83] Fleeing from the attack, many Jews found their way to the Jewish kingdom of the Khazars, just as they had done two centuries earlier, in the face of the destruction of Leo III.[84] Others, one may assume, found their way to the shores of Egypt, where a large Jewish community lived and prospered. Steven Runciman, the biographer of Romanus, places this event at the very end of the emperor's reign, whereas examination of the Jewish sources indicates a prolonged period of persecution, spanning a full fifteen years.[85] Runciman considers the attempted destruction of the Jews to represent a pious, deathbed deed on the part of the aging usurper, Romanus (d. 944). But a letter read at the Synod of Erfurt in June of 932 refers to the ordering of the conversion of the Jews of Constantinople.[86] Moreover, the persecution threatened to continue after Romanus' death; correspondence regarding the persecution reached the court of Constantine VII and his wife, Helena, presumably after the former's return to the throne in

[81] Ostrogorsky, *History*, 239–64; R. Jenkins, *Byzantium, the Imperial Centuries: AD 610–1071* (Toronto, 1987), 273; and E. Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio mediterraneo nell'alto medioevo (sec. X–XI)," in *The Jews and the Mediterranean Economy: 10th–15th Centuries*, sec. 1 (London, 1983), 420, for the effects on the economy.

[82] For the power of the Turks, al-Suli, *Akhbar*, in *Islam: From the Prophet Muhammed to the Capture of Constantinople*, ed. and trans. B. Lewis, vol. I (New York and Oxford, 1987), 39–42; for the rise of Egypt, see al-Maqrizi, *Khitat*, in *Islam*, I, 43–59 and Ostrogorsky, *History*, 244–5.

[83] For the most recent treatment of the Jewish sources, see Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 79–80, 114–15. Peter, Duke of Venice, "Epistola," in MGH, *Leges* sec. 4, ed. G. Pertz (Hannover, 1839), vol. I, 7; al-Mas'udi, *Prairies d'Or*, II, 8 (Eng. trans. Starr, *JBE*, 151–2), mentioned briefly in S. Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and His Reign* (Cambridge, 1929), 236.

[84] See above, n. 65.

[85] Runciman relies, not unreasonably, on the account of al-Mas'udi, in the *Prairies d'Or*, II, 8, which marks the event in the last year of the reign of Romanus. Runciman's conclusion, absent the Hebrew sources, makes sense, but cannot stand up in the face of the Jewish evidence; see above, n. 83.

[86] Peter, "Epistola," translated in Starr, *JBE*, 151.

945.[87] Judging by this evidence, the persecution takes on greater meaning as a generation-long policy, not a deathbed act. Absence of further notice from the period of Constantine's sole reign indicates that he either ended the persecution, or allowed it to lapse. However, just as previous persecutions alone cannot account for emigration from the empire, so, too, the cessation of a persecution did not immediately halt the net flow outward.[88]

This decline perhaps continued into the early-eleventh-century upswing of Byzantine-Jewish population, when important settlements of southern Italy fell away from the empire, as it lost its peninsular territory to the Muslims, Lombards and Normans.[89] In the Jewish sources, this process began in 952 with the raids of al-Muʿizz, who was to become the first Fatimid caliph of Egypt. According to the *Chronicle of Ahimaʿaz*, the conquering general kept Paltiel, a scion of the Ahimaʿaz clan, in his service. Paltiel eventually rose to be a trusted advisor to the caliph and helped to organize his conquest of Egypt.[90] Here as elsewhere in the historically difficult *Chronicle*, the precise lines of the narrative, especially regarding the identity and ascendancy of Paltiel, pose specific chronological problems, but none of them belies the fact of Byzantium's loosening grip on the *mezzogiorno*.[91] Thus, as the region was gradually falling away from Byzantine hegemony, Jews continued to find themselves outside the empire, either by conquest or emigration. Meanwhile, a Genizah letter referring to the Byzantine reconquest of Crete captures a pivotal moment during which the tide began to turn in favor of the Byzantines, even as Jews apparently continued to trickle out. Moshe Agura, the author of the letter, writes to his family in Egypt that he hoped to join them there.[92] Moshe describes how he left Crete after the Byzantine victory there in 961, ultimately settling in Byzantine Rhodes. He derides both islands, deeply regretting his settlement in the empire, and he seeks to discover whether or not it is feasible to emigrate to Egypt. In fact, Moshe represents the last period of generalized Jewish emigration from the empire; characteristically, he relied on established

[87] See above, n. 83. [88] On the gradual rate of change, see Ankori, *Encounter*, 114–16.

[89] For a brief overview, see J. Prawer, "The Autobiography of Obadyah the Norman," *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. I. Twersky (Cambridge, Mass, 1979), 110–34.

[90] Mann, *Jews*, I, 16; Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 25; S. Poznański, "Ephraim ben Schemaria de Fostat," *REJ* 48 (1904): 145, following Kaufmann, "Ahimaaz von Oria," 534–5 (= *Gesammelte Schriften*, 34–5). For the most recent considerations of the historicity of Paltiel and al-Muʿizz, *Libro delle discendenze*, ed. and tr. C. Colafemmina, 31–8.

[91] See R. Bonfil, "Can Medieval Storytelling Help Understanding Midrash? The Story of Paltiel: A Preliminary Study on History and Midrash," in *The Midrashic Imagination*, ed. M. Fishbane (Albany, 1993). On the identity of Paltiel, see C. Colafemmina, *Libro delle discendenze*, 31–8.

[92] T-S NS 324.1, in J. Holo, "Correspondence from the Cairo Genizah, Evidently Concerning the Byzantine Reconquest of Crete," *JNES* 59 (2000): 1–13.

connections to his family, similarly Byzantine Jews bearing Greek names, who lived in Egypt, where Moshe now hoped to travel.[93]

These events indicate that around the mid-to-late tenth century, the Jewish population of the Byzantine Empire reached its nadir.[94] In the coming years, the empire would become a destination for Jews from the entire Mediterranean basin, as opportunities expanded in Byzantium, heralded by the very capture of Crete that Moshe describes and, ironically, regrets. Vacillations and reversals qualified the territorial ascendancy of the Byzantine Empire in the tenth century, and as a result the rise in Jewish settlement probably did not take hold for a few decades. Nevertheless, a sea change was taking place in the political strength of the empire, with consequences for the Jewish settlement patterns. The anonymous *Vision of Daniel*, precisely because of its generalizations and literary flair, may capture this moment's shift, and somehow counterbalance the testimony of Moshe Agura, as it presents an almost optimistic outlook, implying a revocation by Leo VI of their forced baptism in the middle of the tenth century.[95]

JEWS OF NON-BYZANTINE ORIGIN WITHIN THE EMPIRE: FROM THE ELEVENTH CENTURY TO THE FOURTH CRUSADE

Beginning in the tenth century, and taking noticeable shape in the eleventh, a series of factors conspired to attract a new tide of Jewish immigration into the empire that they had previously shunned.[96] First and foremost, however, just as seventh-century Arab territorial gains simply engulfed Jews within the Muslim sphere, so too, the Byzantine expansion simply increased the Jewish population by virtue of capturing people along with the territory

[93] Two feminine names are among the addressees: קלי and פותיטין corresponding, in all likelihood, to καλή and ποθητή(ν), meaning "beautiful" and "beloved," respectively. Ankori, *Encounter*, 115, sees in the tenth-century experience a basic breakdown of the Jews' legal and economic position in the empire. Though Moshe's experience may corroborate that interpretation, there is no direct evidence; Ankori relies rather on the sixteenth-century *Shevet Yehudah* of Ibn Verga.

[94] Starr, *JBE*, 7; Ankori, *Karaites*, 160; Andréadès, "Jews in the Byzantine Empire," 6, disagrees, ignoring R. Lecapenus, and claims that "from the eighth to the twelfth century, the Jewish population cannot have diminished to any perceptible degree." Andréadès patently overrates the stability of the Byzantine Empire with respect to the Jews.

[95] A. Sharf, "Vision of Daniel," 130–5, especially p. 121: "He will make a release and give freedom to the holy nation of the Most High, and the Lord of Lords will increase his kingdom," and Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 201–4. See below, chap. 4, n. 34.

[96] D. Jacoby, "What do We Learn about Byzantine Asia Minor?" 87ff. On the parallel Byzantine growth, see Laiou, "The Human Resources," *EHB*, 49.

in which they lived.[97] This Byzantine territorial expansion created important economic opportunities for trade and increased freedom from Muslim pirates.[98] As Zvi Ankori puts it, the Byzantine Empire now emerged "as the stronghold of peace and political stability … in the position to extend to a non-belligerent minority, engaged in international trade, the prospects for an expanding economic enterprise."[99] In comparable measure, the communication infrastructure of roads that linked the coasts to the inland also facilitated trade.[100] Inversely, those same territorial gains that favored Byzantium also harmed, in equal proportion, the Abbasids, who were in steady decline and surrounded by powerful enemies.[101] With momentum in favor of the Byzantine Empire, the course of these developments continued into the twelfth and, in some cases, even the thirteenth centuries, with demonstrable repercussions on Jewish life in the Empire.[102]

Among the earliest voices to describe this new trend, Elhanan b. Shemariah articulates both the negative impulse from Egypt as well as an implied attractiveness associated with the Byzantine Empire. The infamous persecution of Jews and Christians by Caliph al-Hakim in Egypt, together with simultaneous economic troubles (c. 1012–20), caused many Jews to leave hastily.[103] Elhanan b. Shemariah recorded, in a poem, the effect of this persecution on the Jews. Though many Jews converted to Islam, many others

bore the burden of their yoke with all their strength on account of the sin and the persecution and the chastisements; they set out with the Talmud in their hands,

[97] J. L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: the Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden, 1986), 93–8, outlines the Byzantine expansion under Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisces, from the Muslim point of view. See also J. Starr, "Notes on the Byzantine Incursions into Syria and Palestine (?)," *Archiv Orientální* 8 (1936): 91–5, who argues that Nicephorus never made it to Palestine.

[98] J. Kratchkovsky and A. A. Vasiliev, *Histoire de Yahya-ibn-Sai'd d'Antioche Continuateur de Sa'id-ibn-Bitriq*, PO 18 (Paris, 1932), 23, 32ff., 69ff., 84ff., 96; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, 161–4ff.; Jenkins, *Byzantium*, 269–83.

[99] Ankori, *Karaites*, 101–2; Ankori, *Encounter*, 127–8.

[100] A. Avramea, "Land and Sea Communications, Fourth–Fifteenth Centuries," in *EHB*, 57–77; a Jewish community is attested in Dyrrachium, at the terminus of the Via Egnatia, Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 45–6n., 61–2, 217; K. Belke, "Roads and Travel in Macedonia and Thrace in the Middle and Late Byzantine Periods," in *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot, 2002), 73–90; S. Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," 133.

[101] Ostrogorsky, *History*, 196, 252, for Byzantine annexation of Antioch and Aleppo, 258; G. Levi della Vida, "A Papyrus Reference to the Damietta Raid of 853 A.D.," *Byzantion* 17 (1944–5): 216ff., 221; Z. Ankori, "Some Aspects of Karaite–Rabbanite Relations in Byzantium," *PAAJR* 25 (1956): 2.

[102] Jacoby, "Les Juifs," 172–3; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 24–31.

[103] See the more recent translation based on Kratchkovsky's and Vasiliev's edition: Yahya al-Antaki, *Cronache*, trans. B. Pirone (Milan, 1997), 231–2, 247, n. 21, 263, and the Jewish and Christian emigration, on p. 268. See also Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, 184f.

and they left their wealth with the wily ones … they found provisions in *Romah* [i.e., Byzantium], Yemen and Ethiopia.[104]

Following the lead of this illuminating poem, twentieth-century scholars focused on the political pressures in Egypt, namely, al-Hakim's violence against the Jews, to the exclusion of economic considerations.[105] To be sure, the poem appears to describe emigration in relation to precisely these political and religious concerns.[106] However, one of the principal Muslim sources for these events, al-Maqrizi, also points out some of the serious and rather enduring economic strains which surely contributed to the Jews' choice. During the period of the persecution, the Nile failed to flood sufficiently, prices vacillated unsteadily, and Jews and Muslims alike suffered restrictions of movement and commerce.[107] Although al-Maqrizi is silent on the specific reactions of the Jews, his account, combined with the poem of Elhanan, indicates a series of causes, including economic ones, which might reasonably explain their emigration from the troubled caliphate.[108] To this we might add the generalized crisis that later rocked the economy and institutions of Fatimid Egypt between 1060 and 1074.[109]

For a more explicit attestation of the economic forces in this migratory pattern towards the empire, a Genizah letter, written at the end of the

[104] For the flight of the Jews, Mann, *Jews*, I, 34–5, n. 1, citing Elhanan's poem published by I. Davidson, "Poetic Fragments from the Cairo Genizah," *JQR* NS 4 (1913): 54–5. For the destruction of books in the Jewish community in Egypt under al-Hakim, see Oxford MS Heb. a. 3. fol. 21, in Mann, *Jews*, II, 39, ll. 40–1, and M. Gil, *The Land of Israel during the First Muslim Period* (Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 1983), vol. I, 312. For the destruction of churches and violence against Jews and Christians, see al-Maqrizi, *Khitat*, vol. II, 285–9, in B. Lewis, *Islam*, 55–9. Most recent considerations by M. Ben-Sasson, "Genizah Evidence on the Events of 1019–1020 in Damascus and Cairo" (Heb.), in *Mas'at Moshe: Studies in Jewish and Islamic Culture Presented to Moshe Gil*, ed. E. Fleischer *et al.* (Jerusalem, 1998), 103–23, esp. 110–11, 118.

[105] Mann, *Jews*, I, 32–8, esp. p. 35, where Mann follows S. de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes* (Paris, 1838), vol. I, cccix, whose discussion of the humiliations and destruction caused by al-Hakim focuses on the social over the economic, even though that same year (AH 403 = CE 1012), was one of famine. See also Starr, *JBE*, 184–5, who quotes a thirteenth-century Arabic source, Jamal ad-Din Abu'l Hasan 'Ali b. Dafir al-Azdi, *Kitab ad-duwal al-munqati'a*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, *Geschichte der Fatimiden-Chalifen nach arabischen Quellen* (Göttingen, 1881), 210, for the same persecution.

[106] According to al-Maqrizi in *Islam*, ed. B. Lewis, 50, 54, the Jews were forced to wear distinctive clothing, which culminated in the wearing of bells in 1013 and in the edict of expulsion (p. 57). Mann explains that the Jews managed to avert this last decree, Mann, *Jews*, I, 38.

[107] Al-Maqrizi in *Islam*, ed. B. Lewis, 50–2. T-S 12.179, originally published in S. D. Goitein, "Letters from the Land of Israel in the Period of the Crusades" (Heb.), in *Yerushalayim: Review for Eretz-Israel Research* 2/5 (1955): 69–70, and dated by Goitein to the tenth or eleventh centuries (on paleographical grounds), mentions "the waters … [of the] Nile," though this passage is very difficult to translate.

[108] J. Van Ess, *Chiliastische Erwartungen und die Versuchung der Göttlichkeit der Kalif al-Hakim*, Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften 2 (Heidelberg, 1977), 9–17 relates the general strictness of al-Hakim's religious and civil policy – including the persecutions of the Jews and Christians – with economic stresses.

[109] M. R. Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt* (Princeton, 1980), 58–60.

eleventh century, plaintively cites financial setbacks independent of questions of persecution.[110] An unnamed, blind Egyptian scholar, resident in Salonica, comments on the financial pressures which led him to settle in the Byzantine Empire. This scholar notes the conditions under which he first decided to leave Egypt. He recounts the death of a family-business partner as the catalyst, at which point "I never had anything but expenses."[111] The author then migrated from Egypt to Jerusalem, thence to the Byzantine east, and ultimately to Salonica. After having settled in this last city, he worries about his family, because he heard that "in the year 48 the Nile did not flood over, and my heart trembled, and I have no rest, neither by day nor by night. For God's sake, write me immediately regarding your well-being …"[112] The anonymous scholar's heartfelt fears for his family speak eloquently to the hardship of a low Nile season, such as the one that al-Maqrizi describes during the reign of al-Hakim. These considerations compound his worries associated with his memory of business failings that impelled him to set out for new opportunities, or perhaps simply to escape.

Aside from these financial motives, Jews also experienced an internal set of circumstances which, though complicated, facilitated migration to the rejuvenated empire. Many Jews in Byzantium and Egypt shared ongoing relationships with one another. The prior movement of Byzantine Jews away from the empire had resulted in populations of Jews in Arab lands with cultural and, in some cases, actual kin in the Byzantine Empire. Personal and business letters, as well as the presence of Egyptian Jews with Greek names, illustrate those enduring relationships and ongoing communication at least as early as the tenth century.[113] These connections naturally channeled the efforts of the potential immigrants, in particular those whose correspondence was preserved in the Genizah.[114] In the eleventh century, the Egyptian relatives and acquaintances of Greek Jews in

[110] The letter, T-S Ar 53, fol. 37, includes a partial date, "48," which S. D. Goitein, "The Jewish Communities of Saloniki and Thebes" (Heb.), *Sefunot* 11/1 (1977): 11–12, concludes, based on the reference to the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, to be the Christian year 1088.

[111] Ibid., 20, ll. 11–12.

[112] Ibid., 21, ll. 28–30. On p. 11, Goitein points out that the date 48 represents the last two digits of the year 4848 AM, which corresponds to 1088–89 CE.

[113] See tenth- and eleventh-century letters from Crete to Egypt in N. R. M. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah* (Tübingen, 1996), 11–28, and Holo, "Correspondence." Cf. Abulafia, "Asia, Africa and the Trade of Medieval Europe," in *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol. II, *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. Postan and E. Miller (Cambridge, 1987), 432.

[114] Perhaps most notably, Leo, the Marathean Jew, lived in Alexandria; see T-S 16.251 in Mann, *Jews*, II, 93, and Starr, *JBE*, 195; also see Evdokia, who appears to have lived in Egypt: de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 18. See also the generalized trend beginning in the twelfth century among European merchants, in D. Jacoby, "Migration of Merchants and Craftsmen," in *Trade, Commodities and Shipping*

Byzantium, seeking out the empire's improved conditions, were therefore able to work within a network of established relationships. By the same token, as they moved northward, those émigrés continued to maintain contact with their families in Egypt. By means of this web, Greek- and Arabic-speaking Jews (many families included both) were able to immigrate to the Byzantine Empire without necessarily having to start over from zero. The sense of opportunity that this demographic context afforded the Jews comes through not only in the content but also in the tone of one such Genizah letter. The author, an immigrant from Egypt to Seleucia, cajoles his correspondent to join him in the empire where, he says, he made his fortune.[115] Thus, a strong personal element complemented a series of socio-economic forces, which together resulted in multidirectional, eleventh-century migrations, generating a net increase in the Jewish population of the Byzantine Empire.

One important group of Jewish immigrants to Byzantium does not appear to have made the choice based on familial or cultural ties. Rather, Arabic-speaking Jews from the Levant and Egypt, who may or may not have been related to Byzantine Jews as far as the sources indicate, settled in the empire for their own, varied reasons, economic and otherwise. These immigrants began to establish their own, new network of communications based on the families and friends they left behind in the Arabic-speaking world. A Hebrew Genizah letter from the year 1096–7 laments the inevitably false messianic hopes that the approaching Crusade inspired among the Jews of Byzantium. It also portrays a Byzantine-Jewish community made up of Crimean and Arab Jews, reflecting the range of Jewish nationalities within the Byzantine sphere. The author bemoans the fact that

> all the communities have been stirred and have repented before God with fasting and almsgiving; not only from the land al-Khazaria did seventeen communities go forth (as the report goes) to the wilderness of the nations (we do not know if they met up with the [Ten] Tribes or not), but also from the land of the Franks, who sent a messenger with letters … Now, in Constantinople – more specifically Abydos, near Constantinople – some small communities have arisen [in expectation of the Redemption and] in accordance with the words of Daniel.

in the Medieval Mediterranean, sec. I (Aldershot, 1997), 542. In the intellectual realm, see the commentary on Kings, which the editor, N. de Lange, considers to be a composition by an Arabic speaker for a Greek-speaking audience; see de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 117–53, esp. 142, n. 11.

[115] The letter from Seleucia adopts an enthusiastic tone; S. D. Goitein, "A Letter of Historical Importance from Seleucia (Selefke)" (Heb.), *Tarbiz* 27 (1958): 521–36; English version Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia (Cilicia)," *Speculum* 39 (1964): 298–303.

Though preoccupied with spiritual matters, this letter speaks directly to demographic history, as it describes a Jewish community with a pluralistic constituency and extensive lines of communication.[116]

Among the Jewish communities mentioned in the letter, that of "al-Khazaria" raises certain questions of identification. At first blush, it implies Khazarian Jewry, but in the context and usage of the day, it must mean Crimean Jewry, and obviously reflects their contact with and, perhaps, residence in Byzantium.[117] It is possible that Crimean Jews included a contingent of descendents from Khazarian refugees, resulting in the appellation by Petahyah of Regensburg of the Crimean peninsula proper as "Khazaria." But beyond the word itself, there is no proof.[118] In some sense, the referent of the word reveals less than the word itself; in using the Arabic definite article *'al* before the word Khazaria, the author may reveal himself to be an Arabic speaker.[119] What is more, the same usage applies to the author's (inconsistent) spelling of Constantinople (*'al-Qustantiniyah*).[120] Interpreted thus, this letter supports the claim that Byzantine Jewry included contingents from both the Arabic-speaking world and the greater Black Sea region.

[116] For the scholarship on this remarkable letter, see: A. Neubauer, "Egyptian Fragments" *JQR* 9 (1896): 26–9; D. Kaufmann, "Ein Brief aus dem Byzantinischer Reich über eine Messianische Bewegung der Judenheit und der zehn Stämme aus dem Jahr 1096," *BZ* 7 (1898): 83–90; J. Mann, "The Messianic Movements during the First Crusades" (Heb.), *Hatequfah* 23–4 (1924): 243–61, 333–59; Starr, *JBE*, 207. On the crusades in general, see A. E. Laiou and R. P. Mottahedeh, eds., *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington, D.C., 2001).

[117] Starr, *JBE*, 204, 207, note on section C. Also, W. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, tr. F. Reynaud (Paris, 1923), vol. II, 156, explains the application, among the Genoese, of the term *Gazaria* to the Crimea, as evidence of the Khazars' former hegemony there. However, more recently, Dunlop, *History of the Jewish Khazars*, 255–6, seems to take this term as Khazaria proper, even though he grants that the Qipchaks had already overrun the Khazars by then (pp. 256, 258); meanwhile A. N. Poliak, *Khazaria* (Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 1951), 238–45 attributes the Khazars' decline to the arrival of the Mongols in the thirteenth century. For later usage of the word כזר to mean the Crimea, see A. Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliotek: Beiträge und Documente zur Geschichte des Karäertums und der Karäischen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1866), p. 132, scrolls nos. 13, 14; p. 135, no. 89; p. 138, no. 19.

That the term *ashkenaz* does not refer to the Khazars is certain, as Jacob Mann argues in his "Are the Ashkenazim Chazars?" (Heb.), *Tarbiz* 4 (1933): 391–4, in response to S. Krauss, "The Names Ashkenaz and Sepharad" (Heb.), *Tarbiz* 3 (1932): 428, who believes that "there is no doubt that the Khazars are called by the term *ashkenazim*." See also Dunlop, *History of the Jewish Khazars*, 255–6.

[118] Petahyah of Regensburg, "Sibbuv," p. 47: ומהלך יום אחד בארץ קדר ימשך לשון הים ומפסיק בין ארץ קדר ובין ארץ כזריא: "[At] a day's walk in the land of Kedar, [there] extends a bay which separates the Land of Kedar from the land of Khazaria." An idiomatic reading might render לשון הים as "isthmus." E. N. Adler, *Jewish Travellers* (London, 1930), 65, renders it thus, with his suggestions in brackets: "And a day's journey behind the land of Kedar [r. Ukraine or Little Russia] extends a gulf [r. the Black Sea], intervening between the land of Kedar and the land of Khozaria [r. the Crimea]." Cf. the problem of the definition of the term "Kedar," below, n. 138.

[119] See above, n. 117. [120] Neubauer, "Egyptian Fragments," 27, ll. 16–17, in contrast to l. 20.

The aforementioned letter from the blind scholar in Salonica, predating the arrival of the European crusaders by six years, epitomizes the confluence of forces which caused many Jews to settle in Byzantium, and also demonstrates how the strong ties of culture and family inspired communication, even after decades of separation. In his letter to his son, the scholar outlines the impulses behind his voyages: originally desiring "to bury my bones in Jerusalem … I abandoned the inheritance of my ancestral home, and I was separated from [my family]. However, that was not the will of the Lord at the time, for it has now been twenty-six years since I left you."[121] Writing in the year 1090, the author explains that he had remained unsettled for thirty months and was unable to "save enough money for me to travel to you."[122] In the face of his many expenses, he had decided to quit the Muslim lands altogether, evincing a decidedly economic motive for his emigration to Byzantium, even though his original purpose appears to have been pious migration to Israel.[123] Politics and war then impelled him to leave the eastern reaches of the empire; as the Seljuk Turks darkened the horizon, the author was forced to move "westward within the Byzantine Empire (al-Rum) in haste."[124] The author, now a respected scholar in Salonica – according to his claims – does not regret, in the end, the course of his life. He movingly sums up his condition for the benefit of his sons:

> As for me, despite my blindness and the diminution of my strength – both of which have afflicted me in this foreign land – I have not perished. Indeed, my situation is very good, and blessed be the Lord who insures my sustenance with His lovingkindness.[125]

At a minimum, he claims to have found stability and a place to ply his trade in the thriving city of Salonica.[126] Moreover, writing in Arabic only six years prior to the letter of messianic fervor from that same city, he reinforces the impression given by that letter, that Arabic speakers without prior connection to the empire now populated the Salonican Jewish community.

The rise of the Byzantine Empire's political fortunes, the concomitant decline of the Abbasids and the disastrous reign of al-Hakim ultimately renewed Jewish interest in the Byzantine Empire. Even so, the social and religious disadvantages of the Christian world continued to contrast with the comparatively tolerant reality in the Muslim world. Petahyah of

[121] Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 21, ll. 6–9 (from Goitein's Hebrew translation); also, see above, n. 111.
[122] Ibid., 22, l. 10. [123] See Goitein's comments, ibid., 22–3.
[124] Ibid., 22, l. 15. [125] Ibid., 20, ll. 5–8.
[126] De Lange, "Jewish Education in the Byzantine Empire in the Twelfth Century," in *Jewish Education and Learning*, ed. G. Abramson and T. Parfitt (Chur, Switzerland, 1994), 118.

Regensburg, the twelfth-century German-Jewish traveler, remarks on both the density of Jewish settlements in Byzantium and their downtrodden state. He laments that, "in Greece there is a large Diaspora community, but they are physically oppressed … Indeed, there are so many communities among them that the Land of Israel could not contain them if they were in it."[127] One can only counter this description with a more optimistic comment by an Egyptian doctor in Seleucia who claims that where he lives, he "enjoys all the best that the world has to offer, as in the Fayyum."[128] Endorsing a mixture of both sentiments, the eleventh-century Nestorian bishop, Elias of Nisibis, explains that the Byzantines "tolerate a large population of Jews in their realm … They afford them protection, allow them openly to adhere to their religion, and to build their synagogues." He adds, however, that "there are a large number of Jews who endure humiliation and the hatred of [the Greeks] as of all others."[129] Clearly, the reality of Jewish life in the Byzantine Empire included characteristics of both tolerance and aggression, but these built-in tensions did not necessarily determine patterns of Jewish settlement and prosperity. The sources agree that the eleventh-century Byzantine-Jewish community boasted a growing, widely dispersed and heterogeneous population, despite the inevitable tension between Christianity and Judaism.

Also taking shape in the eleventh century, a specifically Karaite migration complemented the contemporaneous flow of Rabbanite Jews to the empire.[130] The Karaites, a dissenting Jewish sect that coalesced in tenth-century Palestine, simultaneously remained within the larger Jewish fold and mounted the single most significant polemical attack against mainstream, or Rabbanite, Judaism of the Middle Ages.[131] As if to mirror this tension, the Karaites' flourishing in Byzantium in this period roughly follows that of the Rabbanites, even as it also caused conflict between

[127] Petahyah, "Sibbuv," p. 56. [128] See Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia" and n. 145.

[129] Elisha bar Shinaya, *Beweis der Wahrheit des Glaubens* [*Al-burhan ala sahih al-iman*], trans. L. Horst (Colmar, 1886), 42, 103, 117, trans. and excerpted in Starr, *JBE*, 190, 246; Krauss, *Studien*, 67.

[130] N. Schur, *History of the Karaites* (Frankfurt, 1992), 59–60. Schur, in this general overview, follows the prevailing theory of Zvi Ankori in accepting the theory of the migration, mirroring the life of Tobias b. Moses, and centered on the decline of Jerusalem as a center of culture, due to the First Crusade; Jacoby, "The Jews of Constantinople," 225. Simon Szyszman believes that the increase in the Karaite presence in Byzantium resulted from missionary activity; see S. Szyszman, *Le Karaïsme*, Bibliotheca Karaitica 1 (Lausanne, 1980), 57–60. Szyszman's argument, it should be noted, takes as a fact the connection between the Karaites and the ancient Zadokites – a problematic history, especially in regard to Byzantium, where there is no such direct evidence. For a brief evaluation of the reasons for the rise in Byzantine Karaism, see de Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks or Romans?" 110.

[131] For their intermarriage between the sects, see J. Olszowy-Schlanger, *Karaite Marriage Documents from the Cairo Genizah* (Leiden, 1998), intro.

them.[132] At the root of the Karaite transition to Byzantium lay some of the same causes which moved the Rabbanites.[133] For example, just as the expansion of the Byzantine Empire simply engulfed a certain number of Rabbanite communities, so too, the capture of such towns as Edessa most likely incorporated entire Karaite communities.[134] In fact, the claim of Karaite influx into Byzantium is based on the assumed identity of Rabbanite and Karaite patterns of settlement – an assumption based, in turn, on the fact that Rabbanites and Karaites generally coexisted peacefully and shared a common fate, despite different cultural trends and intermittent religious disputes.[135] Benjamin of Tudela, for example, describes the sect as numbering twenty percent of the Constantinopolitan Jewish population – segregated from the Rabbanites but in the same city.[136] Indeed, so linked were Byzantine Karaite settlements to Rabbanite ones that their principal historian, Zvi Ankori, asserts that "reference to a Karaite community alone serves *ipso facto* as testimony of the simultaneous existence of a Rabbanite community also."[137] The historical record preserves only one important exception to Ankori's claim; Petahyah of Regensburg insists that the Karaite population had spread so far and wide that, "In the land of Kedar [Crimea] there are no Jews but only

[132] For the social and communal pairing with the Jewish community at large, see Ankori, *Karaites*, 35–43. The bulk of the literature on the subject, a bibliography in and of itself, deals with the ongoing ideological conflict. For convenient excerpts and translations, see L. Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology* (New Haven, 1952); predominantly for later periods, see the collection of Karaitica in J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, 1931–5), vol. II.

[133] Ankori makes an important point, namely, the attraction of the empire superseded the decidedly heavyhanded governmental control of the economy. On the intimate relationship between the state and the economy, see: S. Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," 132–5; A. Andréadès, "The Economic Life of the Byzantine Empire," in *Byzantium*, ed. N. H. Baynes and L. B. Moss (Oxford, 1948), 62–3. For the dependence on the government for the circulation of coinage, see Hendy, *Studies*, 602–13; Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 81–2. Indeed, the concept of the Byzantine economy as a state-controlled one appears to be axiomatic. Certainly the *Book of the Eparch* (Koder, *Das Eparchenbuch*, 101, 6.16) supports that impression.

[134] Ankori, *Karaites*, 129, n. 152: "At the southeastern end of the vast Empire, the conquest in 1032 of the imporant city of Edessa by George Maniakes and the annexation of the whole surrounding region to the Byzantine State might have possibly increased the Karaite population of Byzantium." Ankori, p. 139, citing Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, 203, undoubtedly considers the very well-established fact of their habitation in the capital as reasonable cause for citing this particular quote in relation to the Karaites. On the Jews: A. Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1937–9), vol. II, 309ff. Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 56, leaves open the possibility of Judah Hadassi being "the Edessan."

[135] Note the lack of direct evidence in Ankori, *Karaites*, 170–82, and pp. 35–7 for the overwhelmingly – though not uniformly – unconflicted coexistence of the two sects. For one of the breaks in the generally tolerant relations, see below, chap. 3, n. 66.

[136] *Sefer Masa'ot*, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. and trans. M. N. Adler (London, 1907), excerpted and trans. in Starr, *JBE*, 231, and Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 335.

[137] Ankori, *Karaites*, 118.

heretics."[138] The term "heretic" clearly refers to Karaites, given the description of their mournful Sabbath and their renunciation of the Rabbis, both emblematic of the sect.[139] The Crimean Karaites, however, did not enjoy exclusivity for too long; a thirteenth-century calendar dispute between the Karaites and Rabbanites in Lukhat (Eski Krim) proves their coexistence in the area by then.[140] As a rule, therefore, the Karaite settlement pattern did indeed follow that of the Rabbanites.

Despite this shared patterns of settlement, the parallel Karaite migration exhibits three distinct and essential qualities. First of all, the bulk of the Karaite scholarly talent and the impetus for their displacement came from Palestine, as opposed to Egypt (whence it seems that most of the Rabbanites came, though the simple fact of the Genizah's documentary wealth may distort the situation). Secondly, the movement of the Palestinian Karaites to Byzantium shifted the momentum of their entire sect, translating, as it were, the center of Karaism from Jerusalem to Constantinople. And thirdly, though the Karaites certainly perceived the same economic and political advantages of the Byzantine Empire, they also responded to conditions particular to their sect. The heated Jewish politics of the first half of the twelfth century in Palestine caused great dissension within the Karaite ranks. Tobias b. Moses, the visionary behind the great literary transfer of the Karaite classics from Arabic to Hebrew, felt stifled in Palestine, where he had gone to study. There, he chafed under the yoke of the Karaite Patriarch, Hezekiah, who belonged to an opposing Karaite party. As his own letters attest, Tobias resented these conditions, and he preferred to leave Palestine

[138] Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 66, believed "Kedar" to refer to the Ukraine; while Ankori apparently understands it to be the Crimea, broadly defined, and not merely the lower peninsula in the Black Sea, by which he may indeed mean the Ukraine. See Ankori, *Karaites*, 60–1, nn. 12–13; he argues his claim on the strength of the usage of "Kedar" in Kaleb Afendopolo's much later *Patshegen Ktav had-Dat*, ed. A. Danon, "Documents relating to the History of the Karaites in European Turkey," *JQR*, NS 17 (1927): 171, no. IX. Petahyah of Regensburg uses the terms "Kedar" and "Khazaria" as two distinct places, separated by a "tongue of water" (presumably an isthmus, though referring to the inlets of water that almost separate two land masses, instead of referring, as in English and Greek, to the neck of land that joins the two larger land masses), i.e., the Crimea proper on the one hand, and the northern coast of the Black Sea on the other. On the identity of the Khazars as a people, see above, n. 117.

[139] Interestingly, the same source cited above by Ankori, namely A. Danon's edition of Afendopolo's *Patshegen Ktav had-Dat*, 171, no. IX, describes a rather joyous Sabbath, altogether dissimilar to the brooding, lightless holiday of Petahyah's account. Certainly, the notable presence of the Karaites in the Crimea until modern times has buttressed Petahyah's claim regarding Karaite exclusivity, but it has also been used to connect the Khazars unrealistically to the Karaites; see S. Szyszman, "Les Karaites de Byzance," *Bulletin d'Etudes Karaites* 3 (1993): 55–75.

[140] Ankori, *Karaites*, 60, n. 12, citing Aaron b. Joseph, *Sefer ha-mibhar [The Book of Choice]* (Gozlow, 1834), 14b. See also T-S 20.45 in Mann, *Texts*, I, 48ff., and the conference discussion on A. Gieysztor's conference paper, "Les Juifs," in *Gli Ebrei dell'alto medioevo*, 528.

for his home in Byzantium sooner rather than later.[141] To the degree the return of the young Karaite leader marks the beginning of the Byzantine supersession of Palestinian Karaism, his correspondence represents a parallel set of internal Karaite impulses, or at least a catalyst for those impulses, as distinct from that of the Rabbanites.[142]

Prevailing conditions of the early twelfth century continued to attract Jews to the Byzantine Empire despite the historic loss at Manzikert in 1071, ongoing pressure by the Turks in Anatolia, and the arrival of Western Europeans in 1096. Most compellingly, a Jewish doctor in the Cilician port of Seleucia boasts of his good fortune, effectively reversing the impression held by Moshe Agura almost two centuries prior, who had complained that Rhodes, Crete and, by implication, the empire at large, were "evil in every way."[143] In fact, by the time of the anonymous doctor's correspondence, the growth of the entire Byzantine-Jewish community – Karaite and Rabbanite – was in full swing. Almost fifty years after the unnamed blind scholar wrote to his family from Salonica, the Egyptian doctor in Seleucia composed this letter to his family living in Egypt.[144] Although the letter does not deal with the nature of his arrival in Seleucia, it does describe the social, religious and economic situation that he found there. Seleucia housed a Jewish community with an Arabic-speaking contingent, and a

[141] T-S 12.347, in Z. Ankori, "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses, the Karaite, of Constantinople," in *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought*, ed. J. Blau et al. (New York, 1959): 23–7. For previous editions of the correspondence, see Mann, *Texts*, I, 383–5; R. Gottheil and W. H. Worrell, *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection* (New York, 1927), nos. 31–2, corresponding to the Freer Collection MSS of the same numbers.

[142] Gil, *The Land of Israel*, I, 657–9, on the correspondence of Tobias ben Moses, especially p. 659, where Gil argues that Tobias must never have returned to the Land of Israel, since he reconciled with his estranged wife, a convert to Judaism from Christianity – a status which, in Gil's view, would have made life in the Byzantine Empire all but impossible.

[143] Holo, "Correspondence," 10–11; Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia," 524. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I*, 140, echoes the new orthodoxy, which considers the twelfth century not to be, as previously thought, a time of economic degeneration and exploitation at the hands of the Venetians, but rather as a dynamic time of economic growth, especially in trade.

[144] The letter from Salonica dates from the year 1090; the letter from Seleucia, from 1137. Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 12, argues for the commonality of the two letters on paleographical grounds as well. Both were written in Judeo-Arabic, and both appear to have been dictated to a local scribe. Obviously, the blind poet of Salonica dictated his letter, but Goitein (p. 12) believes that the doctor from Seleucia also dictated his, based on the colloquial flow of the letter and the similarity of the hands in the two letters. Goitein's argument finds ample confirmation in the examination of Byzantine hands, both literary and documentary. Compare the images in Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes", 16, 18, with: Goitein, "A Letter of Historial Importance," 528–9 (T-S 13 J 21, fol. 17); M. Beit-Arié's typologies in *The Makings of the Medieval Hebrew Book* (Jerusalem, 1993); C. Sirat and M. Beit-Arié, *Manuscrits médiévaux en caractères hébraïques* (Jerusalem and Paris, 1972), vol. I, nos. 73, 95, notes and plates; and the Genizah letter from Rhodes in Holo, "Correspondence," 2.

smaller, dependent town boasted a rabbinical authority of its own. The rabbi and teacher named Hamawi lived

> in Pa(l)aia, which is as distant from Seleucia as Cairo is from the Fayyum. He married off his son there. This is a place which has everything in the world just like the Fayyum. He serves them as rabbi, preacher, judge, and as head of the community. They are about fifty families.[145]

Even though the Jews gravitated, in general, to the larger cities, this passage offers a glimpse into the dispersion of the Jews throughout the empire, including the lesser-known areas.[146] Moreover, the rabbinical presence, especially in a hinterland town, encourages the impression of economic prosperity.[147]

Such wealth is confirmed by our doctor's description of the rich dowry which he offered his son-in-law. Beyond enumerating the specific dowry items with which he endowed his daughter, the author offers the generalized opinion that "dowries in this country are very expensive."[148] He goes on to substantiate his favorable situation:

> If you come here, as you intend to, you will not long regretfully for anything you left there; as Joseph said to our forefather Jacob ("Come down to me; tarry not … and I shall nourish you.") God has favored me and replaced my losses. I have built a house worth 200 dinars, and I possess 400 barrels of wine, each measuring 10 timaya.[149]

The doctor's letter, bolstered by contemporary evidence supplied by Benjamin of Tudela as well as the Salonican scribe from the previous century, proves that the economic promise of the Byzantine Empire was not an empty one.[150]

[145] Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia," 301. For the identification of the town Palaia, Goitein cites M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, Royal Geographic Society Supplementary Papers 4 (London, 1890; reprinted New York, 1972), 163. Ramsay himself cites Ammianus Marcellinus, xiv. 2, 13; this last passage provides the best option for understanding the Hebrew reference:

> They made for a place called Palaea, near the sea, which was protected by a strong wall. There supplies are regularly stored even to-day, for distribution to the troops that defend the whole frontier of Isauria … they [later] rushed on to destroy Seleucia, the metropolis of the province … (From *Ammianus Marcellinus*, trans. John Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge and London, 1953], 20–3.)

[146] Cf. above, n. 5.

[147] Cf. below, chap. 3, n. 13.

[148] T-S 13 J 21 fol. 17. See Goitein, "A Letter of Historical Importance," 529; Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia," 299. One of the enumerated items is a brocade coat, in addition to other textiles of value. Cf. Nasir-I-Khusrau, *Diary of a Journey through Syria and Palestine*, Fr. trans. G. Le Strange (London, 1893), 56; the author compares a new rug of his to Byzantine brocade, the standard of quality and price: "This prayer rug had been bought for thirty gold Maghribi dinars … Now, the same quantity of Rumi (or Greek) brocade would not have cost so much, and the equal of this mat I never saw elsewhere."

[149] Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia," 300 (= "A Letter of Historial Importance," 533).

[150] See Benjamin of Tudela on the Byzantine Jews in Starr, *JBE*, 228–34; the Salonican scholar's story can be found above, n. 112 and below, chap. 3, n. 8.

Other Jews from Egypt, friends of the doctor from Seleucia, had also found their way to the Byzantine Empire. The doctor laments, for example, the passing of Abu'l-Hasan, his first cousin, in Constantinople.[151] Further, not only Egypt but also Palestine produced Rabbanite émigrés to Byzantium. The same doctor's letter refers to yet other third parties who left the Land of Israel to make their way in the Christian empire. In the missive, the doctor refers to his comrades, Ben Shevi'i, or the "seventh," as well as "a prescription for Abraham, the little beggar from Acre," which is to say, a Palestinian immigrant.[152] Of course, Palestine had also served as the jumping-off point for the blind Salonican scholar, who traveled to the Byzantine East after failing to make ends meet as a scholar in Jerusalem.[153] Finally, the twelfth-century case of Samuel ha-Bavli further confirms the breadth of Arabic-speaking Jewish settlement in Byzantium. Writing in Arabic to his correspondent in Old Cairo, or Fustat, Samuel explains his ambition to study "in Thebes and Salonica [where] academies have been established."[154] No notice of his final destination has survived, but both cities obviously presented viable options, complementing the other attestations of Jewish immigration to Cilicia and Constantinople.

Though diverse in origin and destination, the broad trend in immigration to the Byzantine Empire shared fundamental qualities among Karaites, Rabbanites, Palestinians and Egyptians alike. The newly arrived Jews appear to have been able to establish themselves with relative ease, and they certainly managed to do so with success.[155] The presence of schools and the clear economic advantages of the empire led them not only to come, but also to comment on the fruits of their efforts. Their own words tie this demographic swing to economics, as most pithily expressed by the doctor from Seleucia who marveled (or, more accurately, complained) that "dowries in this country are very expensive."[156] In addition, as with the Seleucian doctor, other letters and third-party accounts illustrate a fundamental point of contact between demography and economics: the immigrants maintained active communications with their native homes, keeping the door open for human, cultural and economic exchange across the sea.

[151] Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia," 300.

[152] Goitein, "A Letter of Historial Importance," 528–9, II. 5–7; interpretation, 524, n. 6; Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia," 299. Goitein points out, p. 299, n. 7, that Ben Shevi'i and Abraham must have come from Palestine via Egypt, hence they are known to the recipient of the letter.

[153] See below, n. 181.

[154] T-S Ar 53, fol. 37 in Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 30, l. 13.

[155] Mann, *Jews*, II, 307, n. 2 quotes Maimonides, *Qove teshuvot ha-Rambam*, 1:27a, no. 140, where he exhorts a man not to return to the Byzantine Empire.

[156] See above, n. 148.

CONTACTS AMONG BYZANTINE JEWS ACROSS POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

The multifarious nature of Byzantine Jewry, a result of the two broadly conceived trends of migration, led to an equally varied and dispersed network of human relationships. These connections, in turn, constituted the basis for an entire series of economic ties that took advantage of the facility of communication in the current languages (Hebrew, Arabic and, to a lesser degree, Greek) and the trust engendered by familiarity. Among these languages, Hebrew played the crucial role as a cohesive force among Jews everywhere, and even when communicating in languages other than Hebrew, the Jews overwhelmingly used Hebrew script.[157] Most notably, however, the dispersed Byzantine Jewry availed itself of precisely that diffusion to cultivate the business and personal ties that underlay their ability to engage in economic transactions across the region.[158] If in the tenth to twelfth centuries the net directionality of Jewish migration was oriented towards Byzantium, this web of personal connections nonetheless qualifies it, so that the lasting lesson of this period is not the simple fact of migration to the empire, but more precisely migration in tandem with increased, multidirectional communication and greater movement across the eastern Mediterranean in general.[159] In this fashion, not only Arabic-speaking immigrants to the empire but also the converse, that is, a Jewish population of Byzantine ancestry in the Arab world, anchored the southern and eastern quadrants of this network and its associated trade, which flourished in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Four patterns of international interaction emerge based on the development of Jewish movement and settlement. First, the Byzantine Jews who found themselves in Muslim territory as a consequence of the Arab conquest often maintained personal and economic ties to Byzantium. The second

[157] De Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks or Romans?" 111–16 provides a compact and compelling explanation of the importance of the Hebrew language, in both the practical realm of communications and the less easily defined sense of identity. See also Baron, *History*, IV, 173; A. Sharf, "The Jews, the Montanists and the Emperor Leo III," in *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium*, 117, n. 50. D. Jacoby, "Byzantine Asia Minor," 83.

[158] The Jews could be found in all the major cities of the empire, and some smaller towns. See Ankori, *Karaites*, 112, n. 95; Mann, *Jews*, II, 92–3; Starr, *JBE*, 194f., and Starr, "The Place-Name 'Italiya-Antaliyah'," *Rivista degli studi orientali* 17 (1937–8): 475–8; for Nicaea, see A. Schneider, *Die Römischen und Byzantinischen Denkmäler von Iznik-Nicaea*, Istanbuler Forschungen 16 (Berlin, 1943), 36–7. The epigraphs described by Schneider are cited by Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 89, who dates them approximately to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries.

[159] Grossman, "Communication," 109–12.

pattern naturally follows as a corollary to the first: the Arabic-speaking Jews who immigrated to Byzantium after the tenth century maintained connections to *their* original countries, a fact which the Genizah preserves with regard to Palestine and, to a greater extent, Egypt. Third, both the Karaites and the Rabbanites, acting in parallel fashion, maintained internal communal and religious ties with other communities that contributed to their economic development both directly and indirectly. Fourth, the entire constellation of Egyptian Jewry – itself including Karaites, Byzantines, and Rabbanites of both the Palestinian and Babylonian ecumenes – often received and redeemed Byzantine-Jewish captives, by virtue of that country's economic importance and its bustling port of Alexandria.[160]

Prior to the tenth century, the evidence of Byzantine-Jewish connections abroad is very sparse. On balance, however, the slight evidence that has survived, bolstered by the stronger and more numerous sources from subsequent centuries, paints an interesting picture. Over the course of the tenth century, the sources begin to increase, and with them evidence of communication among Greek-speaking Jews waxes stronger and more convincing. Certainly by 912, which marks the promulgation of the *Book of the Eparch* and its attempted ban of Jewish silk exports, Byzantine-Jewish interests spanned the eastern Mediterranean region.[161] The admittedly composite picture therefore suffers from inevitable lacunae, but the evidence justifies the working conclusion of ongoing Byzantine-Jewish communication across the Mediterranean as early as the seventh century.

In regard to seventh-century Jewish affiliations abroad, the tantalizing and equally obscure *Doctrina Jacobi* gives only a brief hint. It describes how the hero, Jacob, prior to his conversion to Christianity, was "of eastern stock." In describing the "many evil things" he did to Christians, the *Doctrina* recounts his travels: "In the town of Rhodes, since he was a Green, together with the sail menders, he committed evil acts against those Blues fleeing from the East. He handed them over to the sail menders, men of Bonosos, and [the fleeing Blues] were beaten."[162] The undefined "East" and the reference to the flight of the Christians westward both raise the possibility of an allusion to

[160] For the Byzantine community in Egypt, see T-S 16.251, Mann, *Jews*, I, 92; II, 92–3. Redemption of Byzantines in Egypt is not to be confused with its converse, namely, the Byzantine redemption of captive Jews from Egypt and elsewhere. The latter represents one of the major, internal economic functions of the Byzantine-Jewish community, whereas the former illuminates Byzantine-Jewish economic history insofar as it demonstrates contact with the Egyptian community across the sea.

[161] The promulgation of the *Book of the Eparch* was clearly in 912, but its composition is less certain; see Koder, *Das Eparchenbuch*, 101, 6.16.

[162] *Doctrina*, 214–15, V.20.13ff. Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," 106–8, rightly points out the inconsistency with respect to the Jews and the circus factions, since, in the *Doctrina*, they are

territory now under the Muslims, while the unfathomable relationship to the sail menders raises questions of trade affiliations.[163] Both matters must remain in abeyance for lack of context, but they legitimately inspire speculation about the origins and purposes of Jacob in his Jewish persona.[164] What one gleans from this admittedly problematic source is a consciousness of recent Jewish origins in the East, implying ongoing investment, either political, personal or economic, in events there, such that Jacob had reason to mistreat the members of the Blue party fleeing from that general region.

In the ninth century, a group of Jewish itinerant traders known as the Radhanites captured the imagination of the Arab geographer and Abbasid postmaster-general Ibn Khordadhbeh. His famous description of the Radhanites includes their various routes between the Far East to Western Europe and their traffic in expensive commodities, such as slaves, brocade, furs, spices and swords. Living roughly in the middle of the Radhanites' east–west trajectories, Ibn Khordadhbeh presents their travels on either side of him as though part and parcel of a single itinerant unit. This impression has vexed modern scholars, on account of the fact that the Radhanites are otherwise unattested and of unknown origins. Certain basic facts, however, are clear: within the sphere of the eastern Mediterranean and southwestern Asia, they made important stops and sold their goods at, among other places, Constantinople, Jidda, Egypt, Baghdad, Antioch and the Khazar capital Itil. From the perspective of Jewish communication, the implications are relatively unproblematic. The Radhanites necessarily figure in – though to what degree is unclear – the lines of communication and ethnic solidarity that allowed the Jews to penetrate regional markets.[165]

Perhaps the most unfortunate testimony to the strength of the ongoing ties abroad comes from Moshe Agura, who writes from the Isle of Rhodes

potrayed as belonging to both. See above, n. 63. Sharf's point, however, is well taken; the Jews clearly played a part in the politics of the circus factions in any case.

With respect to the sail menders, one cannot assert much, except that they probably joined in the riotous politics, without necessarily having any long-term or deep connection to Jews. Dimitroukas, *Reisen und Verkehr*, 430, is content to take the *Doctrina* passage beyond its literal narrative and to suppose that "Ein Segelnäher *vom Beruf* war allem Anschein nach der Jude Jakob, der Anfang des 7. Jahrhundert" (emphasis added). The text, however, does not warrant such a conclusion.

[163] The importance of sails is perhaps obvious, and therefore it does not surprise to find them the object of Byzantine predations against Damietta, Egypt, in the year 853. See al-Tabari, *Incipient Decline*, 126.

[164] See above, n. 63.

[165] Ibn Khordadhbeh, *Kitâb al-Masâlik wa'l-Mamâlik*, ed. and trans. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1889), vol. VI, 114; M. Gil, "The Radhanite Merchants," *JESHO* 17 (1974): 298–328; E. Ashtor, "Aperçus sur les Radhanites," *Revue suisse d'histoire* 27 (1977): 245–75; N. Thomas, "Râdhânites, Chinese Jews, and the Silk Road of the Steppes," *Sino-Judaica* 1 (1991): 6–15; McCormick, *Origins*, 688–93; D. Jacoby, "Die Radaniya," *Der Islam* 47 (1971): 232–64. For a fuller discussion of the role of the Radhanites, see below, chap. 5.

to his family in Egypt within a few years of 961.[166] The names of both the author and his family members indicate that all of them were, in fact, Byzantine Jews; the use of Hebrew, as opposed to Arabic, also furthers this claim.[167] The transitional moment in which this letter was written boded, in the short run, badly for the Jews. The newly established Byzantine rule on Crete brought with it a series of disadvantages which rendered Muslim hegemony decidedly favorable. Consequently, Moshe urges his Egyptian relatives to help him emigrate. He queries, "If the place is good over there, write us, and we shall go there, all of us, for this island [Rhodes], too, is evil in every respect."[168] In this request, Moshe avails himself of the Byzantine international network, already in place and at the disposal of extended family, even though separated by geographical and political boundaries.

The economic aspect of international contacts finds most unambiguous representation in a Hebrew business letter that deals with a series of ongoing transactions in hides. Jacob, the author, remarks to his correspondent, Shabbetai Ravilon, that "even though I wrote to you about the hides [asking] that you send them to Crete, [do not] send them but select the defective ones, and send them [instead]."[169] Peppered with heretofore unattested Judeo-Greek technical terms, this letter confirms the existence of an actively Greek-speaking community in Egypt, probably as early as the late tenth century.[170] Quite eloquently, this letter also confirms that non-resident Byzantine Jews would continue to be active within the cultural, human and linguistic realms of Byzantium.

More problematic evidence from Salonica may reveal a connection between Jews in Syria and those in Greece, on the eve of the First Crusade. In his letter describing the messianic fervor among the Jews of the eastern Mediterranean, Menahem b. Elijah explains that "we have definite information that R. Evyatar ha-Kohen, the head of the academy, sent a letter from [Levantine] Tripoli to the community of Constantinople" to the effect that miracles had occurred (supposedly proving the imminence of the Messiah). The news aroused the Jews throughout the Byzantine Empire, as the letter points out that "all the congregations have been stirred, and have repented before God with fasting and almsgiving."[171]

[166] Holo, "Correspondence," p. 1.
[167] Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio," 352.
[168] Holo, "Correspondence," p. 11.
[169] De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 22, l. 9.
[170] For this early date by analogy to another document, see de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 12. However, de Lange's introduction disclaims any dating for the MSS except to remark that they fall in the classical period of the Genizah, i.e., tenth to twelfth centuries. For futher evidence of Greek Jews in Egypt, see below, n. 204, and chap. 3, n. 105.
[171] Starr, *JBE*, 205; Mann, "The Messianic Movements during the First Crusades," 253–9; Neubauer, "Egyptian Fragments," 26–9.

This letter addresses, albeit incompletely, a number of questions relating to Byzantine-Jewish demography and communications. Simply by referring to a letter from Levantine Tripoli to Constantinople, the letter proves contact with cities under Muslim rule. Tripoli lent itself to such communications with Byzantium, both through its location next to the former Fatimid border and its status as a major sea port. Genizah documents place it well within the sphere of common Jewish trade, and it was also known as "a place of customs, where all ships that come from the coasts of the Greeks and the Franks … pay a tithe to the Sultan [who] also has ships … which sail to Byzantium and Sicily."[172] The sources do not reveal, however, whether or not Tripoli housed a Greek contingent within the larger Jewish community. The Jews supposedly resettled the city after Mu'awiya's victory over the Byzantines in the year 635. As such, the Jewish community of Tripoli may have descended from Byzantine forebears, but again, any such historical connection depends on inference.[173] This letter of messianic ferment demonstrates communication between the Byzantine world and the Jews of Levantine Tripoli, whether those Jews were of Byzantine heritage or, equally plausibly by the late eleventh century, Islamicate Jews.

More certain is the multinational makeup of the Greek communities as described in the Salonica letter. Bewildered and impressed by the human mass of crusaders heading to Palestine, Byzantine "congregations were profoundly shaken and repented before God with fasts and charitable donations, including [the community] from Khazaria." Other Genizah sources confirm that Salonica attracted Jews from both the Black Sea region and the Muslim world.[174] Not surprisingly, the same letter also mentions other Greek communities, such as Thebes and Constantinople, among whom communications must have abounded. In its portrayal, therefore, of Salonica as a cosmopolitan center of Jewish culture, in its mention of ties to communities in Greece and Syria, and in the mere fact of having been sent to Egypt, the letter of messianic fervor reveals established lines of communication both within the empire and outside it.[175]

[172] Nasir-I-Khusrau, *Diary*, 8. For Jewish business dealings between Fustat and Levantine Tripoli, see Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 190, 212f.

[173] Ahmed ibn Yahya, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, trans. P. K. Hitti (Beirut, 1966), 195.

[174] Translated from Neubauer, "Egyptian Fragments," 27; cf. Starr's translation, *JBE*, 204.

[175] For further ties, see M. Gil, *A History of Palestine*, 546: "Damascus was evidently a sort of way-station for Babylonian immigrants to Palestine and also for people coming from Byzantium, who would first stop there and then go on to Palestine, whence some would sometimes continue westward … [the cantor] Isaac Alfasi, a Maghribi, who was apparently on his way to Egypt from Byzantium, stopped in Damascus and then in Jerusalem." For further comment on communication among Jews abroad

Personal ties, as well as communal and economic, contributed to the ongoing efforts at communication across the Mediterranean.[176] In a Genizah letter, a man named Saʿad chastises his son-in-law, Aaron, who had left his wife and family for Seleucia thirteen years prior, once again indicating an influx of the Jews in the eleventh century. S. D. Goitein originally published this eleventh-century letter, addressed to "Seleucia, to the honorable teacher and rabbi, Aaron the scholar," thinking that it was destined to Syrian Seleucia. He only changed his mind and attributed it to Byzantine Seleucia in light a of later Genizah attestation of Byzantine Jews in that town.[177] The other factor in his reconsideration was the use of Hebrew; Greek-speaking Jews, whose vernacular – contrary to Arabic – had long since ceased to be a lingua franca, relied more heavily on the universal language of the Jews.[178]

Other letters demonstrate how recent Jewish immigrants to the Byzantine Empire cultivated their familial ties; in particular, Arabic speakers from Egypt and Palestine enriched the network of Jewish trade and communication across the Mediterranean. Two cases stand out, not only for exemplifying this fact, but also for revealing the particular travails of immigration associated with women.[179] Here, the fluidity of contact and travel on the north–south axis of the eastern Mediterranean comes alive in the experiences of these two women, both of whom hoped to return to Egypt from the empire. In the first case, the above-mentioned blind Egyptian scholar, writing from Salonica around 1088, mentions any number of family members and friends in Egypt, whose names he still remembers, about whom

with regard to this letter, see A. Sharf, "An Unknown Messiah of 1096 and the Emperor Alexius," in *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium* (Ramat-Gan, 1995) 145. For Salonica as a center of Jewish learning, see below, chap. 3, n. 73.

[176] Cf. the letter of Moshe Agura, above, n. 168.

[177] T-S 12.179 in Goitein, "Letters from the Land of Israel," 69, who judges that the letter may even date to the tenth century, based on paleographical considerations. Goitein revisits this document as a sidenote to his publication of another, unrelated, Genizah letter, from the unnamed doctor (see above, n. 44) who also lived in Seleucia ("A Letter of Historical Importance from Seleucia," 521–2, n. 4). Goitein's note bears repetition and translation, for it reflects his later thoughts on T-S 12.179 as being addressed to *Byzantine* Seleucia:

> In this letter, the writer complains that his son-in-law had abandoned his wife and children (but in the letter only the daughter is referred to) twenty-three years earlier. Regarding the recipient of the letter, it only mentions that he was attacked in an "ambush." The letter was written in Hebrew, which perhaps indicates that the recipient was originally a Byzantine who came to Egypt and there married, after which he returned to his [native] land. Below [in the doctor's letter to which this is a note], the letter h/ה is used in the word *Selukiyah*/סלוכיה, as in this Hebrew letter.

[178] For the importance of Hebrew among Byzantine Jews, see de Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks or Romans?" 111–13; with respect to the Khazars and their integration into the Jewish world by means of Hebrew, see Gieysztor, "Les Juifs," 500.

[179] Cf. the case of "Rivka, the daughter of the dear elder Joseph, who was from Byzantium," in Olszowy-Schlanger, *Karaite Marriage Documents*, 342–9.

he still asks, and most importantly, with whom he still maintains contact. To wit, the author, in encouraging his son to write back, urges him to send a letter via his friend "Amram b. Nahum in Alexandria, for he will send [the letter] to us, and he, in turn, should address it to: Salonica, the Upper Synagogue."[180] Despite this ongoing communication with Egypt, and even though the elderly scholar felt "beloved and respected among all God-fearing individuals and among all who have [scholarly] understanding and insight," his wife (his fifth) did not share his enthusiasm for Salonica.[181] In his letter he explains that she "yearns to travel" home. Additionally, his daughter, notwithstanding her probably Byzantine birth, shared her mother's melancholy.[182] Perhaps in solidarity with her mother, she refused to take a husband, "even though many of the young men seek her [hand]."[183]

In a similar, though undated, case another mother–daughter pair also preferred Egypt to Byzantium. Maliha, a woman who had emigrated from Egypt to Byzantium, sought to return to her native land, even though she had already laid considerable roots in her new home. Her daughter, who bore the Greek name Zoë, appears to have been born in Byzantium, which indicates that her mother must have spent enough time to marry and at least to begin to raise a family. Despite her resettlement, the homesick Maliha, presumably a widow, wanted to return with her daughter to Egypt. In order to do so, she either wrote or dictated a Hebrew letter to her brothers, Solomon and Abu Sa'id, in which she asks them to come and escort her home.[184] Maliha's case exemplifies the communication of Byzantine Jews throughout the Mediterranean and the implications of those dynamics for the very definition of a given Jew as "Byzantine." Perhaps even more tellingly, her letter also makes explicit the relationship between such ties and trade. Combining familial piety with profit, Maliha, in the two fragmentary sentences at the end of the letter, advises her brothers to bring money to buy "merchandise, and come here to Byzantium (*romaniyah*) … and one of you can collect merchandise."[185]

[180] Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," p. 21, ll. 33–5. In the twelfth century, the same phenomenon appears in converse. Commenting on the letter of the Seleucian doctor to Egypt, Goitein points out ("Letter of Historical Importance," 522) the mention of "eleven men who were apparently in that city [Seleucia] and who were known to the recipient in Egypt."

[181] Ibid., 20, ll. 8–9. [182] Perhaps a young teenager; for the age of girls in marriage, see chap. 3, n. 137.

[183] Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 22, ll. 18–19, 27; commentary, 13.

[184] T-S 13 J 11[4], Mann, *Jews*, I, 241–2, II, 306–7; Starr's translation, *JBE*, 214; on the name Zoë among Jewish women, cf. L. Zunz, *Gesammelte Schrifen* (1875–6; reprint, three volumes in one, Hildesheim and New York, 1976), vol. II, 61.

[185] Mann, *Jews*, II, 307, ll. 21–2.

The cases of these two immigrant women naturally raise fascinating questions as to the specific problems that faced wives and daughters in a mercantile economy dominated by men. As best as one can fathom, the women came to Byzantium not on their own initiative, but following their husbands.[186] For Maliha, widowhood appears to have rendered her permanence in a foreign land a hardship, and the case of the scholar's wife in Salonica suggests that nostalgia and social ties can exert as strong a force as economic motives (since nowhere does the letter indicate privation). Most probably, the absence of the extended family and support system made the comparatively new community of Byzantium feel cold and unwelcoming.[187] Meanwhile, these cases are counterbalanced by that of the wife of Israel b. Nathan; Israel married a Byzantine woman in Constantinople, and when he sought to emigrate to Jerusalem, she refused to follow.[188] Maliha, the anonymous scholar's and Israel's wives share a common point of departure, insofar as they attest the powerful human ties between Byzantium and Egypt, intimating the economic possibility that accompanied those ties.

As the letter of Maliha attests, business and institutional relationships are, at root, personal ones, so it stands to reason that other types of relationships should also spring from and engender personal connections. In that vein, sending students away for rabbinic preparation also resulted in an underlying pattern of settlement that created Byzantine-Jewish connections abroad; it also encouraged specific relationships that interwove both the cultural and economic aspects of such scholarship. In certain cases, Greek Jews studied abroad, having perforce benefited from existing cultural ties and simultaneously establishing new ones.[189] For example, the eminent Hai Gaon, the foremost legal authority of the early eleventh century, responded to a question and referred to "the Greek students from Constantinople who

[186] Jacoby, "Migration of Merchants," 551.

[187] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, III, 200, addresses the absenteeism of the eminent Karaite Tobias b. Moses, who had chronic marital problems; see above, n. 142; T-S 12.347, in which Tobias vents his frustration with his wife, in Mann, *Texts*, I, 383–5. In another letter from Egypt, Dropsie 386, a foreigner sojourning in Egypt describes how the Egyptians pressure him to marry a local woman, despite the fact that he has family back home. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, III, 48, translates part of the letter and surmises that the author's home is Byzantium, based on the fact that his Hebrew style does not appear to be that of a native Arabic speaker; Mann first published the letter in *Texts*, I, 460–3. Simha Assaf first addressed the specifically Byzantine questions of absentee husbands in, "On the Family Life of the Jews of Byzantium" (Heb.), *Be'ohole Ya'aqov* (Jerusalem, 1943), 69–77.

[188] Gil, *The Land of Israel*, II, 120–3, 127–32 (= nos. 465 and 467); apud Jacoby, "The Jews of Constantinople," 224.

[189] On the relationship between the educational and the commercial, see Dimitroukas, *Reisen*, 164; in regard to the trip of a student group from Constantinople to Sinope, Dimitroukas argues that that trip "muß auf einem Handelsschiff erfolgt sein."

are here with us" in Baghdad.[190] Another source mentions two "students from Greece, R. Karmi and R. Judah," who stayed in Egypt during the same period.[191] This scholarly exchange bore important fruits, both for the students who learned at the feet of their masters and for the teachers, who were able to take advantage of living speakers of Greek in order to solve difficulties in the Rabbinic lexicon, which owes much to that language. Although the sources do not indicate how much time these students spent abroad, higher education in the Jewish tradition could easily extend for many years.

By the same token, building strong ties with fellow sectarians abroad also counted among the primary endeavors of the newly established Byzantine Karaite community of the eleventh century.[192] Not least of all, calendrical dependency on Palestinian lunar and seasonal observation rendered such contact between the Holy Land and the Karaite Diaspora necessary.[193] Furthermore, perhaps even more so than the Rabbanites, Karaite doctrine encouraged settlement in, and presumably pilgrimages to, Palestine.[194] This ongoing cultural and intellectual investment in learning would eventually lead to the grand project of translation, which occupied much of the Byzantine Karaite intellectual and economic resources. Byzantine Karaism also made its influence felt in the West, where Spanish Rabbanism found itself obliged to respond to the perceived threat of the dynamic heresy. Through these religious matters, which preoccupied all stripes of Jews,

[190] Originally in Harkavy, *Responsen der Geonim*, 105f., no. 225, and his comments on the historical importance, on p. 362; the passage is discussed by Krauss, *Studien*, 112 (on Greek in Rabbinic literature, see S. Krauss, *Griechische und Lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum* [Berlin, 1898–9]); trans. in Starr, *JBE*, 181. Mann, "Responsa of the Geonim," 489, n. 37, cites other traditions relating to Greek students in various collections of Hai's responsa, most notably, Abraham b. David of Posquières, *Temim de'im* (Warsaw, 1897), no. 119. Byzantine relationships persisted in the former lands of the empire, as with Isaiah of Trani and Barukh b. R. Isaac from Greece, as per I. Ta-Shma, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, vol. III, *Italy and Byzantium* (Jerusalem, 2005), 45.

[191] S. Schechter, "Genizah Ms," *Festschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstag A. Berliner's* (Frankfurt, 1903), 108–12, 110, ll. 9–14. Schechter dates this uncatalogued missive to the early eleventh century, prior to the death of Hai Gaon, mentioned in the body of the letter. The description of the Greek students begins on line 12: "So, too, I heard from the students of Greece, R. Karmi and R. Judah, and the others who sit before us in the study of Mishnah and Talmud, who came from the city of Aleppo to hear us [teach], out of love of learning …" The author places himself in Egypt when he reminds his correspondent of the last time they met, when "you gave us [the] honor [of your visit] in Egypt." For more recent considerations of this topic, see R. Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven, 1998), 132–4; M. Gil, *In the Kingdom of Ishmael* (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, 1997), vol. II, 197–202, l. 13; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, V, 435.

[192] Ankori, *Karaites*, 185. [193] See below, chap. 3, n. 64.

[194] Ankori, *Karaites*, 187, n. 69, citing Nasir-I-Khusrau, *Diary*, 23; see below, chap. 3, n. 212; see also Mann, *Texts*, II, 29f.

Byzantine subjects participated in a network of communication and travel that spanned the Mediterranean and beyond.[195]

These varied ties admittedly connected people and places in their religious or academic pursuits, and as such do not directly color the economic experience of Byzantine Jewry. The value of this network to the economy, however, lies only just below the surface, as these connections frame travel, communication, and perhaps settlement in the reliable, cohesive context of shared social and religious values. For instance, at the intersection of religion, economics and travel, the constant danger of piracy demanded significant and constant investment in charitable funding, in order to redeem Jewish captives.[196] Major port cities, especially Constantinople, were inevitably called upon to redeem captive Jews who ended up in Byzantine territory. Relegating, for the moment, such cases within the borders of the empire to the rubric of the internal Jewish economy, the converse situation, i.e., redemption of Byzantine Jews captured abroad, resulted in Byzantine-Jewish dispersion and necessitated direct contact beyond the borders of the Byzantine state.[197]

The act of redemption constituted, from the point of view of international communication, the second step in a three-step process. The first step, captivity itself, occurred to travelers, and it therefore presumes communications in the first place. Secondly, the process of redemption often forced the victims to stay abroad until ransom could be arranged, giving them time to forge a relationship with the local benefactors who either secured their release or stood in for them as surety. Postulating these inevitable ties, Jacob Mann concluded that, since some of the most compelling evidence regarding the Jews of Byzantium ended up in the Cairo Genizah, at least some Jews from Byzantium and elsewhere must have settled definitively in Egypt.[198] In the third and final step, pursuant to the securing of funds for the costly ransom, redeeming communities routinely wrote circular fundraising letters to various congregations, local and distant, multiplying exchanges.

Three examples pertain to the redemption of Byzantine Jews in Egypt. The first example movingly addresses the burden of ransoming captives and the lengths to which communities commonly went for that purpose. The

[195] Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, 161.

[196] R. Gertwagen, "Geniza Letters: Maritime Difficulties along the Alexandria–Palermo Route," in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora*, ed. S. Menache (Leiden, 1996), 73–92.

[197] For the act of redemption among Christians, see F. Nau, "Le texte grec des récits utiles à l'âme d'Anastase (le Sinaïte)," *Oriens Christianus* 3 (1903): 56–90; apud Starr, *JBE*, 85–6.

[198] Mann, *Jews*, I, 93, II, 94–6.

community of Alexandria addresses Ephraim b. Shemariah, the head of the Palestinian community in Fustat:

> We inform you, our honored brothers, about the matter of a woman captive. They brought her from the land of Edom [i.e., Byzantium]. We ransomed her for 24 gold pieces [= dinars], in addition to the government tax on her. You sent us 12 gold pieces and we bore the rest, as well as the government tax. After this, the sailors [i.e., pirates] brought us two men: the first was a fine young man, a student of Torah, and the other a boy of approximately 10 years. When we saw them in the hands of the Muslims, who were beating them, mistreating and intimidating them before us, we took pity on them, and were deeply moved for them. So we stood as surety for them to their captors. We had not even resolved that [problem] when a[nother] boat from Byzantium came with a great many captives … among them a doctor along with his wife. This furthered our trouble and was a source of pain and anger for us, for we have stretched our resources to the limits …[199]

This particularly expressive example speaks to all three levels of communication which captivity and redemption illustrate.[200] It records not only general trade and communication but also: study abroad, as is evident in the characterization of the young man as "a student of Torah"; the forced sojourn of the captives in Egypt; and the subsequent role of epistolary fundraising.

The second example, though not explicitly dealing with the question of captives, nonetheless raises it. In the year 1022, in the Asia Minor city of Mastaura, a man named Namer b. Elqanah married a woman named Eudocia ("Evdokia").[201] Unlike the other innumerable marriage contracts between Byzantine Jews in the eleventh century, the record of this union has survived to the present day thanks to the fact that their marriage contract, or *ketubbah* (pl. *ketubbot*), ended up not in Mastaura, but rather in the famous Cairene storehouse. Two characteristics of this document address the economic history of the Jews: the wealth which the document serves to transfer and the twist of fate which brought the *ketubbah* from Mastaura to Old Cairo. The property brought into the marriage, including golden jewelry and rich textiles, such as a silk dress, is valued at a total of $35^{1}/_{3}$ gold pieces.[202] Meanwhile, the fact of the *ketubbah*'s arrival in Cairo speaks particularly

[199] Adler 2804, in Mann, *Jews*, II, 89, ll. 15ff.

[200] Ankori, *Karaites*, 46, n. 54, 56–7; A. Cowley, "Bodleian Genizah Fragments," *JQR* 19 (1906–7): 250–4.

[201] On the names Namer and Eudocia, see edition in de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 3; Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 223–4, 249.

[202] T-S 16.374 in de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 1–10, and Mann, *Jews*, II, 94ff. In order to get a sense of the value of the currency, see A. Andréadès, "De la monnaie et de la puissance d'achat des métaux précieux dans l'empire byzantin," *Byzantion* 1 (1924): 75–115. For example, pp. 92–3, one solidus or nomisma could buy approximately two modii of wheat. Different measures of modii put it at

to the question of Byzantine-Jewish demography and communication. Théodore Reinach, the first scholar to bring this *ketubbah* into the realm of traditional Byzantine studies, argues that the couple and their marriage contract must have arrived by means of a Muslim raid, whereby they ended up captive in Egypt.[203] Reinach theorizes that, once redeemed, the couple made their home in the prosperous country, which is a defensible position given the established Byzantine-Jewish sub-community. But that same fact of a Byzantine-Jewish presence in Old Cairo also means that Namer and Evdokia may have migrated for personal reasons.[204] Thus, regardless of the problem of piracy, the fact of the *ketubbah*'s provenance nevertheless points to travel, settlement and communication between Egypt and Byzantium.

The third example provides one of the best-known and most useful records of the redemption of captives. First published by Arthur Cowley and later studied by Mann, Starr and Ankori, the relevant letter touches on a number of aspects of Byzantine-Jewish history. In brief, the eleventh-century circular solicits contributions from various Egyptian communities, in order to pay off the fee of redemption (at a standard rate of 33⅓ dinars per person) for seven captives, while members of the local community had in the meantime put themselves up as surety. The captives – Karaites and Rabbanites – hailed from Attaleia, situated on the southern coast of Anatolia, due north of Alexandria.[205] Generally noted primarily for its revelations about Karaite–Rabbanite solidarity, this remarkable document and the corpus to which it belongs also corroborate the frequency of the trade in captives between Byzantium and Egypt, the ongoing process of redemption, and the implied correlation to regional trade.[206]

somewhere between 11.4–17.0 liters, during the reign of Basil I. For the relative value of the amounts mentioned in the *ketubbah*, see Morrison and Cheynet, "Prices and Wages in the Byzantine World," 856–7.

[203] T. Reinach, "Un contrat de mariage du temps de Basile," in *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger*, ed. G. L. Schlumberger (Paris, 1924), 118–19, follows Mann, *Jews*, I, 93f.

[204] Two cases reveal a Byzantine-Jewish presence in the city of Alexandria. Leo was sent from Alexandria to Marathea, in order to secure funds for the release of Marathean Jews held captive in Alexandria. Mann, *Jews*, I, 92, followed by Starr, *JBE*, 195, assumes that Leo was sent to the Greek town precisely because he was from there originally. See below, chap. 3, n. 106 and Appendix B, p. 396. For a mention of the "Cretan quarter" in Alexandria, see T-S Ar 18(1).113, in J. Blau and S. Hopkins, "Judeo-Arabic Letter," *JSAI* 6 (1985): 431, l. 30.

[205] Bodl. (MS Heb. a. 3, fol. 28). Cowley, "Bodleian Genizah Fragments," 251–4; Mann, *Jews*, I, 88–90, and another case of redemption of Jews from Attaleia, II, 87–8 (= T-S 13 J 14.20) in Starr, "The Place-Name Italiya-Antaliyah," 475–8; Starr, *JBE*, 190–1; Ankori, *Karaites*, 46–9.

[206] Starr, *JBE*, 33: "The significance of this material in the present connection [i.e., captivity and redemption] lies in the hints it affords of the extensive commmercial traveling done by Byzantine-Jewish merchants across the Mediterranean, an aspect of our subject which had been otherwise unknown. Moreover, in light of the fact that the dangers involved in it failed to deter them from this activity, we may infer that the economic inducement was a substantial one."

Captivity, as embodied in these particular cases, not only represents a complicated, though common, form of communication, but it also serves to punctuate the schematization of eleventh-century Jewish immigration to Byzantium, with examples of travel in the other direction. Like the women who lived and built families in Byzantium but later decided to return to Egypt, individual captives also left Byzantium for Egypt, going against the more generalized trend in the opposite direction.[207] Indeed, other fragments also exist, which equally reveal the arrival of Byzantine Jews on the shores of Egypt against their will.[208] Similarly, Alexandria is known to have housed poor Byzantine Jews, in this same period from the tenth to twelfth centuries.[209] Significantly, it was this same infrastructure that, when directed towards less bleak purposes, allowed the Jews to exploit an entire series of economic relationships throughout the region.

THE EFFECTS OF BYZANTINE-JEWISH DEMOGRAPHY ON THE ECONOMY

The development of Byzantine-Jewish demography takes shape in two related patterns, each laying the groundwork for success in the mercantile commerce. First, the Jews' settlement and movements reflect, not surprisingly, some of the major shifts in regional prosperity and political power. With the rise of Islam, many Jews, on the simplest level, just found themselves outside the boundaries of the shrunken Byzantine Empire and under the new yoke of Islam. With the nascent Islamic regime came a number of advantages which, additionally, seem to have drawn many Jews out of the empire, not only by conquest as in the seventh century, but also by virtue of the political and economic enticements that the dynamic young caliphate offered, as over against the detractions of the Byzantine Empire. In contrast, by the end of the tenth century, when the political misfortunes of the Byzantine Empire reversed themselves, so too, did the flow of Jews out of the empire. This time around, Jews, both Greek- and Arabic-speaking, or

[207] See the Cairene marriage document from 1201 of Rebecca, "daughter of the dear elder Joseph, who was from Byzantium," in Olszowy-Schlanger, *Karaite Marriage Documents*, 342–9.

[208] T-S 13 J 20.25, T-S 24.11, T-S 10 J 27.8, Mann, *Jews*, II, 88, 91, 363f. Mann (II, 344) links T-S 13 J 34.3 to Byzantium, based on the proper geographical name אסטרבילו, which Mann assumes to be Byzantine, though he finds no place which corresponds to it. Having searched, neither have I. After scrutinizing the MS, I am convinced that Mann misread the word; it should read אסטרבילו (ʾISṬRBYLO); see below, Appendices A and B, T-S 13 J 34.3. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 49, n. 48, refers to documents that indicate marriages among Byzantine and Egyptian Jews, and these, too, may have ended up in either country.

[209] Jacoby, "Byzantine Asia Minor," 89; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 51.

families which included members of both groups, returned to the reinvigorated Christian empire.

Embedded in this larger pattern of departure and return, the heterogeneous base of Byzantine Jewry encouraged an ebb and flow, as exemplified by the case of Maliha and her family. Hers and other examples, even after the Byzantine expansion, complicate the notion of that growth and even the definition of its constituents as "Byzantine." In other words, this demographic expansion was not stagnant, but complex and dynamic, again mirroring the larger urban trends of the Byzantine economy, in which the empire at large also began to engage in the changing commercial orientation of the Mediterranean.

The second pattern of Jewish demography is therefore a corollary to the first: commensurately increased and multifarious communication among the Jews, which endowed these demographic shifts with considerable economic import. The Karaites, now branching out to Constantinople and her empire, engaged in an ongoing project of scholarly translation of the Karaite academic heritage from Palestine to Constantinople and from Arabic to Hebrew. The Rabbanite majority, with extended (and even immediate) families in the Levant and North Africa, maintained social and economic ties that served them in both good times and bad. These cultural, religious and personal ties bore economic fruit and rendered possible that quality which, more than any other, characterizes this economic history: the Byzantine Jews almost never worked exclusively on a local level. From quintessentially communal business, to the more sophisticated trade in precious goods, the Jews functioned internationally. They traded with fellow Byzantine and Arab Jews in Egypt and Palestine; they remitted money to the Palestinian and Babylonian academies; they sold silk on the international market; they traveled by sea throughout the Mediterranean; and they pioneered in trade with Russia to the north.[210] In this regard, Eliyahu Ashtor's words, originally written about the Jews of Muslim North Africa, equally apply to the Byzantines, who enjoyed a network

[210] The most popularized connection in this regard is that among the Byzantine Jews, the Radhanites and the Khazars, which has been introduced into broader histories, such as that of H. Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, trans. I. E. Clegg (New York, 1937), 28–9 and Baron, *History*, IV, 171–8. Fortunately, Genizah evidence bolsters this theory of the Jewish activity with Russia and renders it highly probable; see Starr, *JBE*, 34, 171–2, no. 119; 183–4, no. 125. Other secondary sources on Byzantium, the Jews and the Russians: A. Vasiliev, "Byzantium and Old Russia," *Journal of Business and Economic History* 4 (1931–2): 319–20; Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 79–83.

of many communities in all of the countries around the Mediterranean. The merchants could take advantage of the collaboration and help of coreligionists, and in the case of conflict, could find recourse in courts before which they were not foreigners and which judged them according to their own law.[211]

In creating the necessary conditions for international communication and trade, the movements of Byzantine Jewry therefore defined the extent and the patterns of these economic activities and their development.[212]

[211] Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio," 438. Ironically, these same words might also apply to the Venetians who, according to the dominant thesis particularly espoused by Ashtor in this article, would later usurp the Jews in the Mediterranean trade.

[212] The Venetians evinced the same qualities in their trading empire; see Jacoby, "Migration of Merchants," 559.

CHAPTER 3

The inner economy of the Jewish communities

Much of that which defines the communal life of the Jews as Jewish can be described in economic terms. Not only did the tightly knit quality of medieval Jewish communities promote a confluence of overlapping interests and pursuits among its constituents, but more to the point, the very nature of Jewish life blurs, if not belies altogether, the distinction between the religious and the economic. Those mundane functions that, to the majority culture, appear unmarked in relation to religion are, in the Jewish experience, part and parcel of it. The two realms collapse together, because Jews understand the spiritual realm of their religion as one expression of their national existence, which naturally includes economic and social organization within it. Under normal circumstances, the members of a given community required a series of specifically Jewish services and products that met local standards for such disparate concerns as: kosher edibles, capable scholars, scribes and emergency funds for the redemption of captives, to name a few. In order to provide these necessities for uniquely, or almost uniquely, Jewish consumption, communities demanded an entire network based on the proffering of and compensation for these services and goods.[1]

This economy, here dubbed the inner economy, is defined by its inward orientation. It assumes Jewish preparation and production of goods, and training for services, specifically for the benefit of Jews. If logically self-contained, this inner economy is not, by any means, self-sufficient, because the Jews' minority status necessarily implied a great degree of porosity with respect to the majority culture and economy. That is, the inward orientation of this aspect of the Jewish economy does not imply a hermetic seal from the world around it. More precisely, the system functioned without purposeful reference to that larger world, even though it depended on it for staples, such as wheat, and even though it operated within the larger

[1] Cf. Bareket, *Fustat*, 70.

assumptions of that world, such as the market price for captives, over which the Jews had no particular power. Given this self-referential but porous structure, the inner economy informs two basic relationships at the heart of the Byzantine-Jewish experience: that of mutual support among Byzantine Jews and their coreligionists abroad; and that between the Jewish community and the Byzantine government, especially in terms of the autonomous communal functions for which the state abjured responsibility.[2]

The conspicuously heterogeneous makeup of the Byzantine-Jewish community, a product of its demographic shifts, partly defines inner economic relationships across the Mediterranean, because although communal and specifically Jewish, the pursuits of the inner Jewish economy did not necessarily function only locally or within the boundaries of the empire. While each community governed its activities autonomously, all Jewish communities in the world required similar functions. Since these human and material resources could be of use to Jewish communities almost everywhere, and since Byzantine Jewry itself both extended abroad and embraced immigrants within the empire, their exchange spanned great distances. In effect, this inner economy, both local and transnational, in some measure helped to define the position of Byzantine Jewry within the orbit of the larger Jewish world, most notably in Muslim North Africa, Mesopotamia and the Levant.

These cultural, institutional and economic relationships among Jews throughout the region also accentuate the relative independence of Jewish communal functions vis-à-vis Byzantine authority. Essentially, this inward-looking economy created a semi-independent sphere of life, in which the members of the Jewish community pursued their own interests with only occasional incursions from the Byzantine authorities, either imperial or ecclesiastical.[3] From the point of view of Byzantine history then, the inner

[2] For examples of the cultural and economic independence of the Jews in the Rhineland and Spain, respectively, see Agus, *Urban Civlization*, II, and Y. Rivlin, *Shitre Kehilat Alicena* (Ramat Gan, 1994). L. Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1924), covers both regions and Greece.

[3] This absence of intrusion relates primarily to the inner – not the general – economy. See, for example, Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 80 (Eng.), 12 (Heb.), where the Jews mete out their own justice, and the Byzantine authorities can or will only intervene if the sentenced party converts to Christianity. Regarding other aspects of the economy, the government, from the earliest days under Constantine, limited Jewish slaveholding, and attempted to force tax compliance and, to a lesser degree, to control their participation in the textile/hide industry. The one known exception to the hands-off policy with respect to the communal life of the Jews occurred under Manuel Comnenos. Manuel subjected Jews to the jurisdiction of the Christian courts, but even here, this non-Jewish jurisdiction applied only in cases in which one of the litigants insisted on non-Jewish adjudication. See Baron, *History*, V, sec. 23, especially p. 57 and accompanying notes.

For the Jews in Christian Roman legislation, see: Linder, *Imperial Legislation*; Rabello, *Giustiniano, Ebrei e Samaritani*; Juster, *Juifs dans l'empire romain*, 2:116–81; Avi-Yonah, *The Jews*, part II. For specific legislation, see Starr, *JBE*, 18–19.

aspect of the Jewish economy offers at least one model for autonomy under Byzantine rule. At the same time, it bears emphasizing that the autonomy that this economy represents and its principals (either Greek speakers or subjects of the Byzantine Empire) are clearly Byzantine in character; and, in the cases adduced here, at least one node of the business in question took place within the borders of the Byzantine polity. Thus, even though the inner economy of Byzantine Jewry developed partially independently from the economy at large, it was still subject, either directly or indirectly, to the particular strictures and opportunities associated with Byzantine jurisdiction. Additionally, the geographical breadth of this inner economy, combined with its insularity, complicates the traditional categories of non-economic and economic exchange. The former implies not only an inner orientation and an independence from impersonal markets, but also a certain geographic restrictedness. Deviating from that model of non-economic exchange, the Jews submitted to market values abroad or at home, depending on the commodity at stake, even in this aspect of their economy that oriented itself to exclusively Jewish needs.[4] Finally, in addition to defining the key relationships that Byzantine Jewry pursued, this aspect of the economy structured communication and exchange that also served to further the Jews' purely mercantile interests throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

RABBINICAL ACADEMIES

The administration of education and justice ranks among the most basic of public services in the life of a Jewish community, and the masters of the Law, or rabbis, served in both of these capacities.[5] In Byzantium, the excellence of rabbinic learning gained significant recognition among Jews abroad, automatically placing the inner aspect of Byzantine-Jewish life on an international scale.[6] Moreover, as publicly sustained services, the school

[4] Dagron, "The Urban Economy," 396; Laiou, "Economic and Non-Economic Exchange," 687.

[5] See Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 61: "R. Amittai [of Oria] … had a number of gracious and worthy sons, intelligent and learned men, liturgical poets zealously engaged in teaching their worthy disciples"; *CII*, I, 432, no. 594, an epitaph, bearing the name Σεβήρα θ(υ)γάτηρ Ἰακώβ δ(ι)δασκάλου, "Severa, the daughter of Jacob the teacher"; for other occurrences of the name Severa, see ibid., I, 102, no. 144; 187, no. 264; 275, no. 352. "Aaron before the assembled community condemned [an adulterer] to death by strangulation. Another … he sentenced … to decaptiation …" as per Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 66. For the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see de Lange, "Hebraism and Hellenism," 135.

[6] De Lange, "Jewish Education," 116–17. The famous poet Judah al-Harizi derides Byzantine Hebrew poetry, precisely because he expects more from the communities of Byzantium that "have, all of them, men of intelligence and culture, of knowledge and discernment, of uprightness and integrity"; excerpted in Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 219–20.

and the courthouse represent not merely social phenomena, but also economic ones.[7] That the individual communities bore the burden for the cost of these services becomes evident in the infrastructure – both financial and hierarchical – that governed the institutions that provided them. Thus, for example, the aforementioned blind scholar from Salonica implies that he is maintained by the community; he considers his "situation to be very good, and blessed be He who, in His kindness, assures me my sustenance; I am beloved and respected by all those who fear God."[8]

The locus of public education was the academy; there, Jewish classical texts were taught, and advanced students were trained as rabbis to serve as judges in civil, and sometimes even criminal, cases.[9] Though firmly based in local traditions, individual academies also aligned themselves with one of the two great centers of Jewish learning, Baghdad and Galilee, respectively called the Babylonian and Palestinian schools. An economic analysis of Byzantine academies suggests two distinct trends among the Byzantine-Jewish population. First, the conspicuous flourishing of academies in the empire implies a healthy measure of both communal autonomy and prosperity.[10] Second, the donations of Byzantine Jews and their investment in scholarly training betray an incremental expansion of investment, shifting from their historical link to the Palestinian academies towards a combination of the Palestinian and the Babylonian ones.

On the home front, the most widely respected of the empire's academies were not to be found only in the Byzantine heartland, but also in Italy. Situated on the heel of the Italian peninsula, in tenth-century Puglia, major centers of Jewish learning thrived, which later inspired the twelfth-century scholar and French leader Rabbenu Tam to pronounce that "out of Bari shall go forth the Law and the word of the Lord from Otranto."[11] Even though southern Italy had already fallen away from the Byzantine Empire in the twelfth century, a contemporary reference to the Greek culture of Isaac b. Melchizedek of Siponto seems to connect Rabbenu Tam's dictum to

[7] De Lange, "Hebraism and Hellenism," 135; Baron, *History*, IV, 215. Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 33; Salzman cites Giesebrecht who claims that "since that time [the eighth century] not only in great cities, but also in towns and villages, [in Italy] there were public schools in which boys were educated in the basic elements of letters." Salzman concludes, on p. 36, by asserting that, "as part of the population of the Empire, the Jews must be similarly judged."

[8] Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 20, ll. 7–9.

[9] Baron, *History*, V, 57, 316–17, n. 69; Baron thoroughly examines the scholarly debate over the Jewish community's jurisdiction over the life of its members. Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 216, quoting Isaiah of Trani, who describes the Jewish authorities' power to "implement the deeper points of the halakha [i.e., law]," in regard to the matter of a case involving debt and divorce.

[10] Cf. above, chap. 2. Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 76.

[11] Jacob b. Meir [Rabbenu Tam], *Sefer ha-yashar* (Vienna, 1811), 74a.

a Byzantine context.[12] The *Chronicle of Ahima'az*, the primary though problematic source for this region, most clearly captures the autonomous functions of the community, in the role of the rabbi as teacher and judge in all manner of disputes.[13] The fame and power of the academies in Oria, where much of the action of the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* takes place, further indicate a prosperous society that maintained a professional class of teachers and students. The story follows the arrival, in the ninth century, of an Iraqi scholar named Abu Aaron, who settled in Oria and began to teach. The *Chronicle* describes how he had originally traveled from Benevento to Oria where

> he found thriving tents [of learning] and well-established academies … Here among them did Aaron establish his home. Here his wisdom bubbled forth, and his teaching was planted. Here he revealed a competence in judicial decision reminiscent of the days of the Urim and the Sanhedrin …[14]

In this declaration, the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* provides the earliest literary evidence for the strength of intellectual life in Byzantine Italy, already in place by the time of Abu Aaron's arrival.[15] In addition, the "judicial decision" signals local enforcement of Jewish law as a function of the academic figures.[16] Also in the fulfillment of public service, rabbinical teaching presented a more popular face, which took the form of synagogue homilies. The sages regularly offered a public teaching on the Law, usually during weekly services. The *Chronicle of Ahima'az* describes

> a man who had come from the land of Israel … [and] remained there [in Oria] for some time. Every Sabbath he would give instruction and expound the Law before the community of the people of God. [This] sage would lead a discussion … and R. Silano would follow with his elucidation.[17]

[12] Abraham ben David of Posquières, in his animadversions against Maimonides, refers to Isaac as "the Greek rabbi," and he is known to have used Greek terms. These and other references to Isaac are outlined in H. Albeck, *Introduction to the Mishna* (Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1959), 245.

[13] R. Bonfil, *Tra due mondi*, pt. I, tackles the historical problems and lessons of the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*.

[14] Starr, *JBE*, 117–18; Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 67 (Eng.), 15 (Heb.); the "Urim" refer to the "urim ve-tumim" or the "breast-plate of judgment" (Ex. 28:30 and passim) that guided Aaron in rendering judgment during the desert wanderings. On "tents" as academies, see N. Golb, *The Jews in Medieval Normandy: a Social and Intellectual History* (New York and Cambridge, 1997), 233–4.

[15] For a general view of the southern Italian Hebrew revival, see S. Simonsohn, "Hebrew Revival," 848–56.

[16] Cf. below, n. 80. The catacombs of Venosa and other southern Italian towns (fourth–sixth centuries) already reveal an organized Jewish community, with communal officials and, presumably, authority, though not all rabbis. See Leon, "The Jews of Venusia," 284.

[17] Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 67–8, 5–6 (Heb.); this passage demonstrates, in addition to the public role of scholars, the ongoing connection to the Land of Israel, which would endure even as the Babylonian influence increased.

As a matter of course, the learned men of the community undertook to teach the traditional interpretations of the Torah to both scholarly and general audiences. Having nodded to this venerable past, the *Chronicle* goes on to describe the perpetuation of these institutions into the future. On his deathbed, the communal leader and scholar R. Shefatiah "demanded this of [his son], that he should maintain the assembly of teachers, and direct it properly, so that the teacher and pupils might not be disbanded."[18] That his directive, or its spirit, was heeded is perhaps reflected in Rabbenu Tam's praise of Oria and Otranto two centuries later.

Epigraphic evidence supports the communal prosperity described, hagiographically, in the *Ahima'az* narrative.[19] In Venosa, not far from Oria, a number of Hebrew headstones from the ninth century were immured in a church, which was destined to remain unfinished. This rich cache documents the southern Italian efflorescence of Hebraic culture and offers some insight into the lives of the local inhabitants.[20] Specifically, two epitaphs honor the memory of a rabbi and a schoolboy respectively, pointing to an educational establishment.[21] These and other examples, together with the prominence of the Hebrew language among these headstones, offer the outline of a decidedly rich, Hebraic culture, tied to the learning not only of Scripture but also Rabbinics and poetry.[22]

[18] Ibid., 86–7 (Eng.), 5 (Heb.).

[19] Ascoli, *Iscrizioni*, 51–9; *CII*, I, 408–65. Neubauer, "The Early Settlement," 612, is less emphatic than Ascoli about the rise in Hebrew culture in southern Italy, though there is no doubt that the epitaphs there evolved from primarily Greco-Latin to Hebrew.

[20] One such epitaph appeared to refer to a rabbi, based on the interpretation of the words as referring to "a most venerable man, full of wisdom and the master of the academy." D. Cassuto has revised this reading to: "a most venerable man, full of grace and of the majesty of old age," see Cassuto, "Two Epitaphs," 5; according to Cassuto, רב ישיבה איש מכובד ובעל חכמה becomes, in his new reading, איש מכובד ובעל חן והדרת שיבה. On p. 7, he points out that his assumption of academies in Venosa led to the misreading, citing A. Milano, *Storia degli Ebrei in Italia* (Turin, 1963), 63; V. Colorni, *Legge ebraica e leggi locali* (Milan, 1945), 145.

[21] U. Cassuto, "Le iscrizioni ebraiche del secolo IX a Venosa" (Heb.), *Qedem* 2 (1944): 108, no. 6; 117, no. 18; regarding the man called "Rabbi Abraham," (רבי אברהם), Cassuto, p. 108, n. 2, further argues: "In later times, it was common in Italy to call all men by the title 'Rabbi,' as we say 'sir' today. Here, however, since in this early period they did not preface the proper names of people with any descriptive title, it appears that the word 'Rabbi' is indeed descriptive of a Rabbi," in the sense of a scholar. The absence of any other "Rabbi" in this, the most complete collection of Hebrew Venusian epitaphs, certainly buttresses Cassuto's claim. In later times, the status of scholar was represented among Byzantine Jews with more explicit titles; see Mann's eleventh-century reference (*Jews*, I, 279, II, 103, n. 2) to "Jacob, the member of the Great Sanhedrin, son of Rabbi Samuel."

[22] D. Cassuto, "Two Epitaphs," 14; C. Colafemmina, "Insediamenti e condizione degli Ebrei nell'Italia meridionale e insulare," in *Gli Ebrei nell'alto medioevo*, 200, 215; See also U. Cassuto, "Le iscrizioni ebraiche"; on the poet Silano, J. Marcus, "Studies in the *Chronicle of Ahimaaz*," *PAAJR* 5 (1933–4): 85–91. In addition, an epitaph dedicated to R. Baruch b. Yonah includes four lines based on the poetry of one of the patriarchs of the Ahima'az clan, Amittai b. Shefatiah; see C. Colafemmina, "L'iscrizione brindisina di Baruch b. Yonah e Amittai da Oria," *Brundisii Res* 7 (1975): 295–300.

In these cases, as with that of the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*, the fact of public support for these institutions and the people who staffed them is implied, simply by necessity and analogy to the well-known structure of donations that maintained academies in Greece, Baghdad and Palestine. Local rabbis probably had other means of support, such as was frequent among their contemporaries throughout the Jewish world, but professionalization also developed in the Rabbinate. To be sure, this funding structure need not necessarily relate to the quality of the institutions or their reputation abroad, nor need the success of the publicly endowed academy necessarily indicate wealth. But the consistency of testimony to the learning and the renown of Jews of southern Italy favors such a correlation. Even putting wealth aside, communal investment in these institutions guaranteed the Jews' legal and civil autonomy.[23]

Various reports confirm that the impression of Byzantine Jewry given by the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* applies not only to Italy but also to Greece and Anatolia. In regard to academies and publicly funded institutions, the consummately useful *Itinerary* of Benjamin of Tudela is the basic source for the twelfth century.[24] Among the most straightforward aspects of Benjamin's account, the lists of scholars in the various cities demonstrate the breadth of demand for learned authorities. Benjamin mentions lay and rabbinical leaders in all but the smallest communities, explicitly noting scholars in Thebes, Halmyros, Vissena, Salonica and Constantinople, not to mention the Italian cities where Jews of Byzantine culture lived.[25] Benjamin's nomenclature for these leaders distinguishes between the functions of scholar

Of passing interest is a reference, probably from the twelfth century, to Brindisi in a Byzantine glossary of the Mishnah (Eruvin 4:1), in de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 297, l. 15, where the place-name פלנדסיס (PLNDSYS) is translated as Brindisi; Maimonides' version of the Mishnah spells it more closely to Brindisi, as פרנדיסין (PRNDYSYN), but he refrains from any identification, except to define it as a place; see *Mishnah with the Commentary of Moses ben Maimon*, trans. J. Kapah (Jerusalem, 1964), 75.

[23] Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 39. On the wealth of Bari's Jews, see Baron, *History*, IV, 348, n. 84; Bacher, "Notes critiques sur la *Pesikta Rabbati*," *REJ* 33 (1896): 40ff. Benjamin of Tudela, *Sefer Masa'ot*, 14 (Eng.), 16 (Heb.), calls the twelfth-century Jews of Constantinople "rich". For a judgment of the court of Bari, see Starr, *JBE*, 172–3, citing *Sefer Raban*, ed. S. Albeck (Warsaw, 1904), nos. 38, 30.

[24] One need only note that Ankori, *Karaites*, passim; Starr, *JBE*, 228–34; and Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 333–7, all relied heavily on Benjamin's *Itinerary*. Even though the *Itinerary* chronologically belongs within the period Starr and Ankori covered, Bowman simply could not afford to ignore it.

[25] Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, secs. 13–26, passim; trans. Starr, *JBE*, 228–32. That at least some of the Jews of formerly Byzantine southern Italy were indeed of Byzantine origin is evident in the name of another R. Ahima'az in the city of Melfi and R. Elijah the Greek in Salerno, who is termed a sage (חכם); see Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, secs. 13–14. For the importance of Halmyros as a Venetian trading post, see D. Jacoby, "Italian Privileges and Trade before the Fourth Crusade: a Reconsideration," in *Trade, Commodities and Shipping in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Aldershot, 1997), sec. 1, 351; Dagron, "Urban Economy," 404; and Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 222.

and benefactor.[26] Benjamin attaches such titles as *parnas* (provider), *rosh* (head), *nadiv* (donor) and *rabbi* to the names of lay leaders who helped maintain the Jewish institutions, without necessarily being scholars.[27] Meanwhile other titles, such as *ha-rav ha-gadol* (the great master) or simply *ha-rav* (the master), refer to the scholars of note.[28] Genizah evidence likewise establishes the importance of Thebes, Salonica and Constantinople, and also names other places such as Seleucia.[29] The thirteenth-century report of Isaiah of Trani mentions a number of Greek and southern Italian scholars in such towns as Thebes and Siponto.[30] Further evidence from a Christian source, describing a forced disputation of sorts, proves (or presumes plausible) a learned presence in Cappadocia.[31] Finally, the simple fact of significant Byzantine scholarship, both Karaite and Rabbanite, in Greece proper points to the rich scholarly culture of the empire.[32] This combined evidence thus indicates a thriving academic infrastructure among Byzantine-Jewish communities, and the inferences of communal upkeep seem to find support in the *Itinerary* of Benjamin, whose titles for lay leaders explicitly commemorate financial contributions.

In addition to the built-in costs of running academies and training scholars, investment in scholarship took another form, which reflects the stance of the Byzantine Jews within the larger Jewish world. They

[26] For the presence of the learned Capsali family in twelfth-century Crete, see D. Jacoby, "Quelques aspects de la vie juive en Crète dans la première moitié du XVe siècle," in *Recherches sur la Méditerranée orientale du XIVe au XVIe siècle* (London, 1979), sec. 10.

[27] *Parnas* speaks for itself, meaning "provider." ובראשם, "at their head," is commonly used by Benjamin to denote communal leaders, without any reference to scholarship. Similarly, the simple title הראש, "the head," does not indicate a scholar; see Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, sec. 18. For a similar use of the title "head," see Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 14, 21, l. 36. *Nadiv*, meaning "donor" or "nobleman," like *parnas*, speaks for itself as a non-scholarly appellation; *Sefer Masa'ot*, sec. 13. For the understanding of the common abbreviation "R." (ר') as "Rabbi," see below, n. 28.

[28] הרב הגדול "the great master," in Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, secs. 16, 18, 25; also, see above, nn. 21, 25. For the use of simpler הרב, ibid., secs. 18, 19, 23. The context of these usages makes it clear that the term רב/*rav*, refers to scholars alone. The juxtaposition of this term with the undifferentiated and ubiquitous abbreviation "R." (ר'), indicates two things: (1) the abbreviation is a simple show of respect for an adult male Jew, in this case, community leaders, akin to the English "Sir," and (2) it should be expanded as רבי/*Rabbi*. Other titles of scholars include תלמיד חכם (*talmid hakham*) and simply חכם (*hakham*); ibid., secs. 12, 19. See Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 98–100.

[29] Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 30, l. 13; for Seleucia, see above, chap. 2, n. 145.

[30] S. Schechter, "Notes on Hebrew MSS. in the University Library at Cambridge," *JQR* 4 (1892): 94. Cf. above, n. 25, and below, nn. 71, 73.

[31] The learned Jews of seventh-century Cappadocia were drafted into a religious debate. See *Les Trophées de Damas*, 234, sec. 3.

[32] De Lange, "Jewish Education"; de Lange, "A Thousand Years of Hebrew in Byzantium," in *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda*, ed. W. Horbury (Edinburgh, 1999), 147–61; de Lange, "Hebrew Scholarship in Byzantium," in *Hebrew Scholarship and the Medieval World*, ed. N. R. M. de Lange (Cambridge, 2001), 23–37; Starr, *JBE*, 50–64.

contributed funds and exchanged scholars with different academies from within the two great spheres of influence in Jewish jurisprudence: the so-called Babylonian academies in Iraq and the academy in Palestine.[33] Early Byzantine Jewry originally fell under the authority of the Palestinian Patriarchate in Tiberias, which represented the Jewish people to the Roman Empire. The Patriarch also collected taxes among Roman Jewry by means of emissaries, whom he sent throughout the empire and who are described in the Theodosian Code.[34] Later examples of fifth-to-ninth-century Greco-Latin and Hebrew inscriptions from the epitaphs of southern Italy demonstrate the persistence of those now well-known offices of the *archisynagogos*, *gerousiarch* and presbyter.[35] And even after the Greek terms gave way to increasingly Hebrew titles in southern Italy (mainly *rav* and *rabbi*) those ancient functions persisted.[36] In other words, though the Patriarch was abolished in the early fifth century by Theodosius II, these economic ties to Palestine did not cease.[37] By the tenth century, however, the sources reveal a nascent inclination among Byzantine Jewry towards the Babylonian academies and their tradition. On some level, this trend simply followed the rest of the Jewish world, which also began to incline towards Baghdad. The Baghdadi academies jostled – successfully – to extend their sphere of influence westward, while the First and subsequent Crusades weakened the Palestinian institutions and curtailed *their* influence.[38] Meanwhile, new immigrants brought with them the rabbinic

[33] The great schools of the Babylonian tradition, Sura and Pumbedita, were located in Iraqi towns of the same names, until they relocated to Baghdad at the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth centuries respectively. For the economic importance of the contributions from abroad to the academies, see Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, 68 (Eng.), 50 (Heb.). In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the center of the Palestinian gaonate was Jerusalem; see Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, II, 562, n. 12, and ibid., I, 51–2, for the continual communication among these centers.

[34] *CTh*, 16.8.14, 17; Julian the Emperor, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, trans. W. C. Wright (New York and London, 1949–53), III, 176–81. For a detailed analysis of these communal offices, see *CII*, lxxxii–ci; Juster, *Juifs dans l'empire romain*, I, 438–56.

[35] The titles appear as early as the fifth century in *CTh*, 16.8.4, 8, 13 and elsewhere; Ascoli, *Iscrizioni*, 51–62; on p. 17, Ascoli dates the Greco-Latin inscriptions bearing these titles to around the sixth century. On p. 18, he dates the Hebrew epitaphs to the ninth century. See also some sources in H. Adler, "The Jews in Southern Italy," *JQR* 14 (1902): 111–15.

[36] *CII*, I, 432, n. 595. Presbyter is even transliterated into the Hebrew alphabet as פרסביטרו (PRSBYṬRO). For *Rabbi* and *Rav*, see Ascoli, *Iscrizioni*, 65, 73, 81.

[37] *CTh*, 16.8 passim. For a similar pattern of change among the Western European communities, see M. Gil, "Between Two Worlds" (Heb.), in *Shlomo Simonsohn Jubilee Volume* (Tel Aviv, 1993), 45–6.

[38] J. Mann makes a point of demonstrating the longevity of the two central Palestinian offices: the *Gaon* and the *Av Bet Din*. Nonetheless, Mann himself laments the severe decline of the institutions, claiming that in the second half of the twelfth century, "there remains very little indeed of the venerable halo" of the academies. See Mann, *Jews*, I, 158. See Ta-Shma, *Studies*, III, 70.

culture long nurtured at Sura and Pumbedita, the great academies in Baghdad. In more complicated fashion, however, the political reality that favored the Babylonian tradition only explains part of the picture. In fact, the Jews of Byzantium followed their own path, which led to the academies of both Palestine *and* Baghdad.[39] Investment in economic and scholarly development reflected and encouraged this evolving relationship, with the result that Byzantine Jews felt no inconsistency in participating in the scholarly realms of both of the great Talmudic traditions, and contributing to their respective institutions.

Though in many ways capturing this shift, Ahima'az b. Paltiel at first frames his *Chronicle* in terms of the original, Palestinian relationship. He introduces himself as the descendant of the exiles from the First Revolt, which ended in the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE.[40] In this historiographical convention of medieval Hebrew literature, the *Chronicle* follows the *Sefer Yosippon*, a tenth-century interpretive synopsis of Josephus.[41] According to the *Sefer Yosippon*, the forebears of southern Italian Jewry came from Palestine "to Oria where they settled and prospered."[42] More than merely a memory of mythic origins, this consciousness of an antique Jewish presence in southern Italy reflects a core historical truth. By extension, the connection to Palestine, regardless of the story of the First Revolt, has a strong historical pedigree. And that connection took a decidedly economic form, in that Jews upheld it by means of continual exchange of money and scholarship.

The background for understanding the donations of Byzantine Italian Jewry can be found in the continuity of Palestinian ritual. The venerable Jewish tradition of Puglia maintained the Palestinian rite, to judge by a funerary inscription from Byzantine Venosa. The headstone in question refers to elegies offered by two emissaries and two rabbis ("duo apostoli et

[39] Bonfil, *Tra due mondi*, chaps. 2–3, esp. pp. 21, 85, 111–12 (chap. 3, "Mito, retorica, storia: saggio sul 'Rotolo di Ahimaaz,'" is a translation of a Hebrew article by the same name, "A Study in the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*" [Heb.], in *Culture and Society in Medieval Jewry*, ed. R. Bonfil *et al.* [Jerusalem, 1989], 99–100). Bonfil sees distinct lines of evolution from Palestinian to Babylonian beginning in the ninth century, with a tentative return to Palestinian culture in the eleventh.

[40] Colafemmina, "Insediamenti," 216, 226–7, links the financial and cultural exchange between Italy and the Land of Israel to the economy at large, emphasizing the central role of Italy at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, as well as the north–south axis of the Appian Way. For a lucid methodological examination of the *Chronicle* as an historical source, see R. Bonfil, *Tra due mondi*, pt. I, passim, and Bonfil, "Can Medieval Storytelling Help Understanding Midrash?"

[41] For dates see S. Bowman, "Dates in the Sepher Yosippon," in *Pursuing the Text: Studies in Honor of Ben Zion Wacholder on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. J. C. Reeves and J. Kampen (Sheffield, 1994), 354.

[42] D. Flusser, ed., *The Josippon [Josephus Gersonides]: the Original Version MS Jerusalem 8041280* (Jerusalem, 1978), I, 432; Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 61 (Eng.), 3 (Heb.); Starr, *JBE*, 114; See above, n. 17.

duo rebbites"), perhaps representing the survival of the ancient tradition of sending out apostles among the Palestinian communities, lending credence to the *Chronicle*'s mention of travel to the Holy Land.[43] What is more, Torah readings in ninth-century, and, presumably, eleventh-century southern Italy also adhered to the custom of Palestine. Specifically, the recital of the benediction for the new month followed the Palestinian Sanhedrin's determination of the calendar: "Ye the whole people heed the sanctification of this month, as decreed by our forefathers, the holy *havuroth* [i.e., the Sanhedrin] who used to convene in Palestine, namely that we have a new month."[44]

On a personal level, the Palestinian connection persisted throughout the middle Byzantine period, as is manifest in an early eleventh-century letter sent by a man named Isaac to his eminent friend, Ephraim b. Shemariah, head of the Palestinian community in Fustat. Isaac states that "many pious Jews from the land of Edom [i.e., Byzantium] and the Land of Israel have already come here. Let me be [treated in your grace] as one of them."[45] While the connection between Egyptian and Byzantine Jewry finds support in many documents, Isaac's connection to Ephraim b. Shemariah speaks specifically to the ongoing ties to the Palestinian community, which then flourished in Fustat.[46]

Two sets of evidence from the Cairo Genizah, one from Sicily and one from southern Italy, seem to reaffirm the connection evinced by the connection between Isaac and Ephraim b. Shemariah. However, since both sets of evidence date to periods subsequent to Byzantine rule, they raise a crucial question: do we assume that the Byzantine culture of the Jewish communities in those places persisted to the point where we can still consider the resident Jews "Byzantine"? In the case of Sicily, the Byzantine culture of the Jews in the eleventh and twelfth centuries is difficult to establish,

[43] *CII*, I, 438; Simonsohn, "Hebrew Revival," 849, 852.

[44] B. Klar, ed., *Megilat Ahimaaz [The Chronicle of Animaaz]* (Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1944; 2nd edn., 1975), 152ff.; E. Fleischer, "Remarks Concerning Early Palestinian Uses in the Reading of the Law and the Prophets," *Sefunot*, NS 1 (1979/80): 42–5. Fleischer argues that the Palestinian reading cycle existed outside of the Land of Israel, in light of evidence from the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* (and modern Italian custom).

[45] T-S 8 J 21.6, Mann, *Jews*, I, 102; II, 110. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 54, translates "Edom" as "Europe." Another letter, which Goitein mentions in the same paragraph, refers to the "Rum and Ifranj Jews," whom Goitein translates as "Byzantine" and "West European," respectively, because of the apparent juxtaposition of the two terms, implying one is eastern and the other western.

[46] R. Bonfil, *Tra due mondi*, 77, 84, argues that the riot of women bakers in the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* reveals Palestinian standards regarding the *kashrut* of bread. Though decidedly economic in its implications, this conclusion may or may not be warranted by the text. His larger claim of cultural tensions between the Palestinian and Babylonian camps, however, seems entirely plausible.

though some argue for it.[47] More demonstrable continuity characterizes Puglia, both in Jewish and non-Jewish spheres. Thus, though the Jews of these two regions generally contributed to the Palestinian academies, it remains unclear whether or not such connections constitute part of the Byzantine-Jewish experience.

The studies of Jacob Mann and Moshe Gil in regard to this evidence merit attention. Both of them perceive an ongoing Byzantine quality to the ties between Palestine and formerly Byzantine southern Italy and Sicily. Mann cites the travels of Ahima'az, whose namesake wrote the Hebrew chronicle and who went to Palestine a number of times.[48] Through the lens of such Palestinian ties, Mann interprets a Genizah letter sent in or around the year 1020; in it, Abu'l-Hayy b. Hakim writes from Sicily to the Palestinian *Av Bet Din*, or head of the Jewish court, Hananiah ha-Kohen. Citing onerous taxes, Abu'l-Hayy seeks to excuse his community's diminished capacity to donate funds to the Palestinian institution. Though Abu'l-Hayy's protestations may mask other motivations, the relevance of the letter does not depend on the spirit behind it; Abu'l-Hayy takes for granted that the donations were expected by dint of standing practice.[49] Mann concludes that "it is not surprising to learn of the relations between Palestine and Italy, since already in the time of Ahima'as the elder, as we have seen, donations were sent from the latter country to the Palestinian school."[50]

Moshe Gil, in his analysis of Abu'l-Hayy's letter to Jerusalem, which he re-edited, makes explicit that which underlies Mann's historical reconstruction.[51] Gil follows Mann in concluding that "this letter confirms a fact which we could have assumed, that is that the Jews of Sicily, like in the other areas that had formerly been under Roman and Byzantine rule, continued to maintain constant contact with the Sanhedrin, the Palestinian yeshiva."[52] In their concurrence, both Mann and Gil perceive some vestige of distinctly

[47] Potential evidence, admittedly ancillary but relevant, comes from the "Vision of Daniel," an anonymous apocalypse that lists a number of places that the author expects to be spared the destruction of the end of days. Among those listed is Sicily. The date of the apocalypse, the second decade of the tenth century, places this association of Byzantine Jewry to the island at the very cusp of Byzantine presence there. See R. Bonfil, "Vision of Daniel," 136, and above, chap. 2, n. 7.

[48] Mann, *Jews*, I, 48–9, 55, n. 3.

[49] ENA 4009, fol. 4; Mann, *Jews*, II, 74, 11. 13–15. For Gil's comments on Mann's opinions, see Gil, *A History of Palestine*, 548, n. 49, sec. 777 (= *The Land of Israel*, I, 450).

[50] Mann, *Jews*, I, 73, and Mann, "The Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim," 411–12. Cf. above, chap. 2, n. 210.

[51] Gil, *The Land of Israel*, II, 75–7, no. 45.

[52] Gil, *A History of Palestine*, 547; Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages* (Leiden and Boston, 2004), 579–81. On the genuine continuity of Byzantine culture in southern Italy and Sicily, see E. Merendino, "Incontri e scontri tra Bisanzio e Italia," *BF* 15 (1990): 377–88, see also below, n. 61.

Byzantine culture in Sicily, even after the Muslim conquest of the island. Supporting these inferences, Benjamin of Tudela, writing in the late twelfth century, refers to the local inhabitants as Greeks and, perhaps significantly, points out that the Jews there practiced dyeing, an occupation in which the Byzantine Jews were prominent.[53] Norman Golb has similarly adduced evidence that demonstrates some Greek-speaking continuity among the Jews in the centuries following the Arab conquest of the island, indeed as late as the thirteenth century.[54]

In another Genizah letter, the son of the Palestinian Gaon Solomon b. Judah (d. 1051) undertakes a fundraising mission. Mann imagines that he was heading towards Italy, because he

> had to go by boat. He evidently did not go to Egypt because, firstly, he could have traveled by land; and, secondly, the Gaon does not mention that he would call on Ephraim [who lives in Egypt]. Hence we can only assume that the Gaon's son went to Italy and perhaps to Spain to appeal personally for the maintenance of the school.[55]

Underlying Mann's reading is the assumption of an ongoing connection between the Byzantine Jews and Palestine. In fact, however, the letter gives no indication of travel to either Spain or Italy.

Despite these indications of Greek culture, Sicilian Jewry showed other signs of having unswervingly developed in the direction of Arabic culture. As such, they necessarily raise the question of whether, despite both Mann's and Gil's claims, Palestinian-orientedness corresponds, in and of itself, to Byzantine roots.[56] Fustat, as is well known, housed a large Palestinian community quite independently of any connection to Byzantium. Sicily, for its part, had changed hands some seventy years prior to Abu'l-Hayy's letter, and the language of his correspondence, Judeo-Arabic, clearly places it in the North African cultural sphere, as opposed to the Byzantine.[57] Indeed, the constant contact between North Africa and the island had

[53] Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, sec. 15, on the Jews of Brindisi. It is also interesting to point out that Benjamin names one of the communal leaders of Melfi, in Puglia, ibid., secs. 13–14.

[54] N. Golb, "A Judaeo-Arabic Court Document of Syracuse, A.D. 1020," *JNES* 32 (1973): 118–19.

[55] Mann, *Jews*, I, 127; Poznański, "Ephraim ben Schemaria de Fostat," 158–9.

[56] D. Abulafia, "Le comunità di Sicilia dagli arabi all'espulsione (1493)," in *Gli Ebrei in Italia*, ed. C. Vivanti (Turin, 1996), 47–50.

[57] The Arab conquest of Sicily took place gradually and was finally completed in 965. A brief eleventh-century victory for the Byzantine Empire on the island was too little, too late, for the Norman conquest had begun. And though Jews in Byzantium also wrote in Judeo-Arabic, they were Byzantine in the sense that they lived under Byzantine rule, surrounded by Jews and non-Jews of Greek–Roman culture. In Sicily, where only vestigial culture might qualify the Jews as Byzantine, Judeo-Arabic seems to remove the author from that cultural sphere.

rendered Sicily nothing less than a "sub-region of the Maghrib."[58] It is also noteworthy that Arabic endured among the Sicilian Jews for centuries after the Norman conquest, whereas no known Genizah sources from Sicily are in Greek. Still, one document does refer to a Jew with a Greek name, and Abraham Abulafia noted, in the late thirteenth century that the Jews in Sicily "not only speak the local language or Greek, as do all those who dwell there with them, but have preserved the Arabic tongue which they had learned in former times, when the Ishmaelites were dwelling there."[59] One must question whether Sicilian Jewry embodied much, by the eleventh century, that was Byzantine, even if one can confidently assert that allegiance to the Palestinian academies endured on the island, as a nearly contemporary letter from Ephraim b. Shemariah indicates.[60] That coincidence does not allow the projection of Byzantine cultural affiliations onto this Palestinian connection, tempting as it is. Scholarship must content itself with, at the most, an appreciation of the possibility that such connections *may* reflect the vestiges of a Byzantine Sicilian past.[61]

Byzantine Karaites also cleaved to their venerable institutions in Palestine. First of all, the Karaites looked to Palestine for direction in matters of Karaite law. The Byzantine Karaites constantly sent their students to Palestine for

[58] Kraemer, "A Jewish Cult of the Saints in Fatimid Egypt," in *L'Égypte fatimide: son art et son histoire: actes du colloque organisé à Paris les 28, 29 et 30 mai 1998* (Paris, 1998), 364.

[59] Contrast this situation to that in Crete, where Greek continued to thrive among the Jews, even under Muslim rule. See Holo, "Correspondence," 8, and Z. Ankori, "Jews and the Jewish Community in the History of Mediaeval Crete," in *Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Cretan Studies* (Athens, 1968), vol. III, 351–2. For the Greek Pappos, see Gil, *In the Kingdom of Ishmael* (Heb.), II, 689–94, recto, l. 69. Abulafia translated by D. Abulafia, "The Italian Other," 231.

[60] Gil, *A History of Palestine*, 547–8, no. 776.

[61] M. Ben-Sasson, *The Jews of Sicily: 825–1068* (Jerusalem, 1988), no. 1, relates some Latin evidence regarding Jews in a Sicilian jail during the Byzantine period, which was translated by Starr, *JBE*, 136. So, too, Ben-Sasson brings Donnolo's account of his capture in the year 925 on pp. 99–101 (= Starr, *JBE*, 149).

One potentially promising business letter deals with Byzantium, but this source also lacks firm evidence that Byzantine Jews are involved. T-S 13 J 19.20, in Ben-Sasson, *Jews of Sicily*, 381–7, is a Judeo-Arabic letter which mentions, on line 20, "a great deal of merchandise from the lands of Byzantium [Rum]." Dropsie 389, in Ben-Sasson, *Jews of Sicily*, 65–88 is the longest known Genizah letter. Lines 16–18 mention "that partner who went to the Byzantine [Rum] city, remained there for a few months, and he took a loss, and got sick for a week. Our compatriots requested of me that I take from him the principal, after giving him credit from the total, of 452 quarter-dinars until Hanukkah."

A point of interest regarding Sicilian Jews and the grain trade: A. Guillou, "La Sicile byzantine," *BF* 5 (1977): 127, and L. Ruggini, *Economia e società nell'Italia annonaria* (Milan, 1961), 311–12, both consider Jews to have been important in the grain trade from Sicily, though to a diminished degree after the seventh century.

For the relationship between the Sicilian liturgical tradition and that of the Greek-speaking community, see Y. Sermonita, "Liturgy of the Jews in Sicily" (Heb.), in *Jews in Italy: Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Umberto Cassuto*, ed. U. Cassuto and H. Beinart (Jerusalem, 1988), 138–9.

training, as Zvi Ankori has assiduously documented.[62] In the late eleventh century Tobias b. Moses, the famed translator of Karaite texts, lived in Constantinople and led the movement to transfer the classical learning of the Karaite academies from Palestine to Byzantium.[63] Similarly, the Karaite calendar depended entirely on news from Palestine in order to provide the agricultural and lunar observations which determined their sequence of months.[64] Thus, a twelfth-century letter, presumably from Salonica, explains that the Karaites "received letters from the Land of Israel, to the effect that the early spring barley-grain (*'aviv*) did not appear in the month of Nissan, and so Passover was celebrated in [the subsequent month of] Iyyar," fully one month out of phase from the Rabbanite calendar.[65] Even in light of this sort of potential for ritual disjuncture between the two sects of Judaism, the Karaites generally integrated themselves functionally into the Palestinian Rabbanite political and academic world. In his correspondence, which contains much autobiographical information, Tobias b. Moses explains his reliance on Palestinian Rabbanite and Karaite leaders, in order to support his study in Palestine and to help him return home to Constantinople. In short, Palestinocentrism crossed the divide between the two primary, competing Jewish sects, and it oriented Byzantine Jewry for the bulk of its history.[66]

Those ancient ties to Palestine, however, despite their endurance, could not stem a powerful tide. Though the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* depicts continued donations and relations, it does so side by side with a record of contributions to the Babylonian academies. The *Chronicle* unfolds in relation to Abu Aaron, an Iraqi sage who set this cultural shift in motion with his arrival in Oria in the eighth century.[67] As Jacob Mann indicated in relation to Sicily, the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* presents interesting evidence

[62] Ankori, *Karaites*, pp. 184–93.

[63] S. Poznański, *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon* (London, 1908), 62.

[64] T-S 20.45, in Mann, *Texts*, I, 46, 48–51; Ankori, *Karaites*, 132. On the date and provenances of this letter, see Ankori, *Karaites*, 328–34, who places it in eleventh-century Salonica; Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 14, places it there later.

[65] Mann, *Texts*, I, 49–50, 11. 34–5.

[66] Ankori, "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," 1–39, 15ff. The previous editions and interpretations of the two letters can be found in: Mann, *Texts*, I, 383–83, and Gottheil and Worrell, *Fragments*, nos. 31–2.

[67] For the earliest consideration of Abu Aaron's arrival, see A. Neubauer, "Abu Ahron le Babylonien," *REJ* 23 (1891): 230–7. Neubauer went on to publish the first edition of the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* under its original title, *Sefer Yohasin*, in his *Medieval Jewish Chronicles and Chronological Notes* (Heb.) (Oxford, 1887–95; repr., Amsterdam, 1970), 111–32; see above, n. 14. Gil, "Between Two Worlds," 49. R. Bonfil, "Myth, Rhetoric, History? A Study in the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*" (Heb.), in *Culture and Society in Medieval Jewry*, ed. R. Bonfil *et al.* (Jerusalem, 1989), 99–100, points out how the established connections between the Jews of Christian Europe and Baghdad do not appear in the *Chronicle*, except for the very specific story of Abu Aaron.

which seems to support the notion that, by the eleventh century, the Jews of Byzantine Italy contributed to both the Baghdadi and Palestinian schools. Paltiel, the ancestor of the *Chronicle*'s author and born into the Byzantine community of Oria, led an expedition into Egypt on behalf of the Fatimid conqueror al-Mu'izz. On Yom Kippur, he

> vowed to the God of his praise 5000 dinars of genuine and full value; 1000 for the head of the academy and the sages [in Palestine], 1000 for the mourners of the Sanctuary, 1000 for the academy of the Geonim in Babylon, 1000 for the poor and needy of the various communities, and 1000 for the exaltation of the Torah, for the purchase of the necessary oil.[68]

Keeping in mind the challenges inherent in reading the *Chronicle* historically, we need not attribute literal or particular historicity to a given account in it to imagine a degree of verisimilitude or plausible rhetoric. Read thus, these donations bespeak dual or multiple loyalties, even assuming that this particular act either never happened or is exaggerated.

Echoing this more variegated academic alignment, the famous legend of the four captives, preserved in Abraham ibn Da'ud's *Sefer ha-qabbalah*, describes a series of events that indicate that the Byzantine Jews actively associated with the Iraqi academies. According to the legend, which is set in the tenth century, the four Jewish captives were picked up by Muslim pirates in

> the Greek sea and the islands therein … on their way from the city of Bari to another called SPSTYN. These scholars were traveling for the purpose of collecting funds for the academy … One [scholar] was R. Hushiel, father of Rabbenu Hananel; another was R. Moses, father of R. Hanokh …; the third was R. Shemariah, son of R. Elhanan; and I do not know the name of the fourth.[69]

[68] Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 94 (Eng.), 19 (Heb.). Another, very similar donative was given in Jerusalem by Paltiel's son, Samuel; see *Ahimaaz*, 97 (Eng.), 21 (Heb.). Gil, *A History of Palestine*, 547, n. 49, describes the eleventh-century, Sicilian judge, Masliah b. Eliah, who stayed in Baghdad with Hay Gaon. Naturally the question arises, here as elsewhere with respect to Muslim Sicily: were the Jews there Byzantine in culture and affiliation, as the Romaniote Cretan Jews had remained? See above, n. 59.

[69] Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries*, 178; Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, 46 (Heb.), 64 (Eng.), n. 12, like those before him, offers no identification for the Hebrew ספסתין (SPSTYN). Gil, "Between Two Worlds," 49, and in *Jews in Islamic Countries*, 177, argues for the unlikely identification of the city as Sfax. The context of the story puts the captives squarely in the realm of the Babylonian academies, though Gil argues for the same story's connection to Palestine, on account of a reference in a Genizah letter to Hanan'el b. Hushi'el, one of the story's protagonists, in connection with a collection for the Jerusalem academy. (Might this justify the reading of (εἰ)ς Πα(λ)αστίν for SPSTYN?) At the same time, Gil argues, ties to Baghdad were weak, though the evidence he adduces, "Between Two Worlds," 50, reflects the presence of communication and indeed, the expectation of it.

Moshe Gil, though adopting a more accepting view towards the story's historicity, infers not only Babylonian but Palestinian ties as well, in light of a series of other documents and intimations from third parties. In brief, if the story seems to reflect Babylonian ties thanks to the fundraising for the (presumably) Iraqi academies, the person of Hushiel, whom Gil identifies as hailing from Bari, preserves a Palestinian link, though that connection requires, as with Sicily, an assumption of Byzantine Jewry's ancient Palestinian connection.[70]

By the eleventh century, less ambiguous sources confirm the ascendancy of the Babylonian schools. In the first half of the eleventh century, Siponto sent four students to the greatest living rabbinical authority, Hai Gaon of Pumbedita.[71] Thus, even as Byzantine Jews sent their students away to Egypt for training in the Palestinian tradition, so, too, did they encourage tutelage under the Babylonian one.[72] Conversely, in correspondence unrelated to Siponto, a Jew from Egypt explains his plans to emigrate to Byzantium for the purpose of pious study. Samuel b. R. Judah "the Babylonian," whose name betrays Iraqi extraction, seeks out the "esteemed scholars" of academies in Salonica and Thebes and, at least in his own person, links those academies to the Babylonian tradition.[73]

A fascinating responsum from thirteenth-century Spain, though not associated directly with Baghdad, nonetheless reveals the currency of Babylonian-oriented scholarship in Byzantine legal and economic life at the beginning of the late Byzantine period. In it, the eminent Solomon ben Abraham ibn

[70] Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries*, 178–83; 204–5.

[71] S. Assaf, *Tequfat ha-ge'onim ve-sifrutah* (Jerusalem, 1955), 43, nn. 2–3; S. D. Goitein, *Jewish Education in Muslim Countries Based on Records from the Cairo Genizah* (Jerusalem, 1965), 182, no. 14. See Starr, *JBE*, 180, where Hai Gaon mentions his Greek students. See also, Gil, "Between Two Worlds," 48-50, for Babylonian academic connections.

Another less compelling, but interesting case comes from Mann, "The Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim," 488, n. 36; a responsum refers to the "Roman Jews who corresponded with R. Sar Shalom Gaon." The Roman Jews are referred to as בני רומי (*bnei Romi*, meaning "Romans" or "citizens of Rome"). *Romi* may refer to the city of Rome, as Mann understands it, or it may also refer to the Roman/Byzantine Empire. That the Jews perceived Byzantium as Rome is evident in the use of the same term, *Romi*, in a chronicle listing all the Roman emperors, from Julius Caesar to Nicephorus Phocas, titled סדר מלכי רומי, found in Neubauer, *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, 185–6. What is more, Mann himself believes the same term, in the poem by Elhanan b. Shemariah, to refer to the Byzantine Empire (see above, chap. 2, n. 104). Needless to say, the common Greek term for those whom we call "Byzantine" today was in fact "*Romaioi*." On the other hand, responsa tend to refer to the *city* of the petitioner, which supports understanding *Romi* as Rome.

[72] See above, n. 45.

[73] T-S Ar 53 f. 37, Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 30, l. 16; Goitein, *Jewish Education*, 184–5, no. 17. See also Schechter, "Notes on Hebrew mss.," 94, for Isaiah of Trani's (c. 1200–c. 1260) mention of Greek sages, especially (in light of Samuel ha-Bavli's comment on Thebes) R. Abraham of Thebes. See also, de Lange, "Jewish Education," 116–17.

Adret of Barcelona responds to a legal question from Constantinople: A man had died in Mallorca and left his library to his sister in Constantinople. The decedent stipulated that his sister not sell the collection to their uncle under any circumstances. Despite this injunction, the sister sold the books to precisely that uncle. A third party, despite being appointed to serve as the daughter's agent, brought suit to nullify the sale.[74] This case is informed by many factors besides that of Babylonian orientation, such as the preeminence of Ibn Adret and the geography of the litigants. Still, if it in any way represents the Byzantine-Jewish experience of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, then one can speak in terms of a Byzantine-Jewish culture that was integrated into the surrounding, predominant Babylonian-Talmudic orientation, here embodied in the person of Ibn Adret.

Taken as a whole, the sources in regard to Byzantine-Jewish orientation do not permit a convincing, linear evolution of cultural and financial investment from Palestine to Baghdad. So, we must be satisfied with the distinct impression of a hybrid orientation.[75] Byzantine-Jewish communities invested, financially and otherwise, in the institutions of both centers. This evolution bespeaks a dynamic process that never resolved itself, and has quite naturally inspired differing theories as to how it played itself out. Zvi Ankori argues that the Karaites' commitment to Palestinian learning functioned partly as a reaction to the growing Byzantine Rabbanite investment of human resources in the Babylonian academies of Sura and Pumbedita.[76] But the Karaites needed no external prodding in the direction of Palestine; their religious requirements permanently favored, on their own terms, constant and committed contact with the Holy Land. Equally possible, for example, is the reverse, namely, that in part thanks to the positive Karaite influence, the Byzantine Rabbanites persevered in their commitment to Palestinian academies. This, even as the Rabbanites simultaneously approached the Babylonian ones. Alternatively, one might dispense with the notion of the two vying or concurrent orientations, and follow the interpretation of Roberto Bonfil. His argument emphasizes juridical independence, according to which Byzantine communities distanced themselves from both Baghdad and Palestine in favor of a homegrown intellectual and legal tradition, parallel to a similar, contemporary transition in Spain, which was already in full swing by the time of the writing of the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*.[77] This argument, however, presupposes a correlation between

[74] Shelomo b. Adret, *She'elot u-teshuvot ha-Rashba'* (Jerusalem, 1976), 105, no. 139.
[75] N. Danzig, "The First Discovered Leaves of the *Sefer Ḥefeṣ*," *JQR* 82/1–2 (1991): 103–9.
[76] Ankori, *Karaites*, 188, n. 72. [77] Bonfil, "Myth, Rhetoric, History," 97.

independence and distance, which need not be the case, nor is it necessarily evident in the *Chronicle*, where generous donations still link – even if merely rhetorically – Byzantine communities to the East. Since there is a financial-charitable component to these relationships, it seems to confirm the dual orientation of Byzantine Jewry, quite aside from any independent leanings of its own. Furthermore, another face of economics, namely, contractual traditions and formulas, still spoke the language of the great academies, even as local tradition also asserted itself.[78] These vestiges of a dual orientation persist together with hints of independence, which also emerged as the Baghdadi and Palestinian academies both entered their twilight in terms of prestige and influence.[79] It seems that this complexity is best accounted for by the demography of tenth-to-twelfth-century Byzantine Jewry, with its variegated composition and ties abroad.

COMMUNAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Jewish communities everywhere, in their capacity as corporate entities, required a great deal of financial support for the maintenance of those institutions which guaranteed their autonomous functions, especially in the regulation of family and business law, education and public worship.[80] The locus of this communal governance was the synagogue, as distinct from the academy. The latter, though equally supported by the community, was run by the rabbis in their scholarly role, while the synagogue heads or community leaders might just as easily come from the lay ranks as from the rabbinate. Like the ties to distant academies in Palestine and Baghdad, however, the involved process of organization and public maintenance of the synagogue occurred on both local and international levels. Fundamentally, the local hierarchy relied on donations for day-to-day existence, as well as emergencies, such as the redemption of captive Jews.[81]

Documentary and legislative sources that describe Byzantine synagogue administration and maintenance hail primarily from the early Byzantine period. Prior to the Muslim conquest, the vast majority of synagogue inscriptions in the Byzantine realm, including Palestine, are dedications, commonly expressed by the Aramaic *dekhir le-tav* ("may he be remembered

[78] See below, n. 127. [79] Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia*, 11–18.

[80] For a study work on the analogous role of the Jewish pious foundation in medieval Islamic lands, see M. Gil, *Documents of the Jewish Pious Foundations from the Cairo Genizah* (Leiden, 1976).

[81] One classic and ongoing need for synagogues would have been, as it was for churches, the cost of candles for illumination, and fuel in general, see Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 195.

for goodness"), in recognition of a donation.[82] Palestine, however, is not alone in boasting a wealth of such inscriptions; the Diaspora too provides over 100 examples of Jewish donatives, although none dates to later than the fifth century.[83] These lapidary sources, while providing early evidence for Jewish settlements and individuals, tend not to include direct information about the nature or amount of the donation, though they clearly imply conspicuous generosity.[84] Among the community at large, beyond the exceptionally large gifts, communal maintenance took the form of taxes, as described in the Theodosian Code and the correspondence of Julian the Apostate.[85] Reasonable analogy with these earlier sources justifies the imputation of some degree of continuity in the existence of both voluntary and compulsory contributions. But specific conclusions about the nature of synagogue fiscal organization in the middle Byzantine period elude us.

The difficulty stems, predictably, from the relative dearth of records of donations in the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. One unique stone from Trani, though outside the empire by its composition in 1247, preserves the memory of an extremely generous gift, which included funds for the building of a roof, window, doors, floor and choir in the building which housed the synagogue.[86] Beyond that inscription, a remarkable partial-Bible that describes its own fate in a series of colophons appears to have ended up

[82] J. Naveh, '*Al pesefas ve-'even* (Jerusalem, 1978), 137, nos. 17, 19, 21, 29, 42, and elsewhere. Any number of examples could be cited, but a brief glance at some typical ones reveals how common this set phrase was. L. Roth-Gerson, "Similarities and Differences in Greek Synagogue Inscriptions of Eretz-Israel, and the Diaspora" (Heb.), in *Synagogues in Antiquity*, ed. A. Kasher, A. Oppenheimer and U. Rappaport (Jerusalem, 1987), 133, 141, points out that one of the major categories of Greek inscriptions is simply a literal translation of this and other Jewish stock phrases, for example, "μνήθη εἰς ἀγαθόν καί εἰς ἐυλογίαν."

[83] Roth-Gerson, "Greek Synagogue Inscriptions," 136; for a notable exception, see below, n. 86. One fascinating (and long) inscription from Stobi, in modern Macedonia, refers to the donor as the "ὁ πατὴρ τῆς ἐν Στόβοις συναγωγῆς" in M. Hengel, "Synagogeninschrift von Stobi," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 57 (1966): 146; S. Cohen, "Epigraphical Rabbis," *JQR* 72 (1981): 1–17.

[84] Ibid., 136. [85] Julian, *Works*, III, 176–81.

[86] Ascoli, *Iscrizioni*, 84–6, no. 40:

בשנת חמשת אלפים ושבע ליצירה
נבנת זאת הבית על יד מנין נעים
החבירה בכיפה גבוהה הדורה חלון
פתוח לאורה ושערים הרשים לסגירה
ורצפה למעלה סדורה ואצטבאות
לישיבה עורכי שירה להיות צדקתו
שמורה לפני שוכן בשמי שפרה

In the year 5007 [= 1247 CE] from the Creation [of the Universe]
this synagogue was built. With pleasing proportions

as a donation. The colophon ends with the act of Jacob and his brother R. Isaac, who "dedicated this half-Bible, in memory of their mother, Hannah b. Abraham. May they be worthy of reading from it, they, their children and their children's children forever after them, amen … "[87] Another colophon, perhaps from the tenth century, commemorates the donation of a book of Psalms and Job to the Karaites of Sulkhat (Eski Krim).[88]

As with Byzantine communication with academies in Iraq and Palestine, the titles and work of synagogue functionaries promise some sense of the way they allotted resources. A petition of the Jews of Syracuse, some of whom may well have borne titles similar to those of the early Byzantine period, to rebuild a synagogue in the seventh century offers a glimpse into that actual work.[89] No title, however, better captures the financial contribution of lay leaders than that of *parnas* or "provider," and two incidences of that office appear between the tenth and twelfth centuries. The first comes from a tenth-century liturgical poem, wherein the author's full name includes his patronymic followed by the sobriquet *parnas*.[90] And again, two centuries later, Benjamin of Tudela describes a Byzantine leader who boasted the same office.[91] A pair of eleventh-century letters refers to another, more problematic, title which numerically ranks the members of the synagogue hierarchy. The Seleucian doctor, in his letter translated by

did he [the donor] compose it: a high, ornate roof, a window
open to the light, and gates did he install for closing,
the floor well-arrayed above, and the benches
for the choirs to sit in, so that his righteousness
might be duly noted before Him who lives in the Heavens of Grace.

The term "synagogue" is literally "capital city," but can also refer to the Temple Mount (I Chron. 29:19), thus perhaps in the sense of מקדש מעט ("a minor Temple"), a concept used to describe synagogues and academies. "With pleasing portions" appeared to Ascoli to be either of foreign origin or a neologism. He translates it as "secondo un numero armonioso," by which he may intend the same meaning as my translation, or a harmonious *quantity*, as the literal words of the Hebrew imply. Ascoli suggests the possibility of reading כיפה as "cupola." "Duly noted" is an idiomatic rendition of the Hebrew "guarded" or "preserved."

[87] Mann, *Texts*, I, 55; this is the same partial-Bible which we can follow from owner to owner, see below n. 145.

[88] Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 135, no. 72; Ankori, *Karaites*, 125–6, and n. 143. It is dated by Abraham Firkovitch to 929, but naturally, any early dating by Firkovitch raises doubts, due to his pious falsifications in a number of cases. As a point of disclosure, Ankori notes that the next earliest mention of Jews in this town dates to the thirteenth century; for Ankori's thoughts on the validity of Firkovitch's dates, see *Karaites*, 60, 126, n. 144.

[89] See above, chap. 3, n. 35; Starr, *JBE*, 86–7.

[90] I. Sonne, "Alcuni osservazioni sulla poesia religiosa in Puglia," *Rivista degli studi orientali* 14 (1933): 68–77, apud Starr, *JBE*, 150.

[91] Benjamin of Tudela, *Sefer Masa'ot*, sec. 23, mentions R. Joseph the *Parnas* of Harmylo (i.e., Armylos), and R. Solomon the *Ro'sh* and R. Eliaqim the *Parnas* of Constantinople. On the hierarchy and offices of the Middle Byzantine-Jewish community, see Krauss, *Studien*, 87–8.

S. D. Goitein, refers to a third party who bears no name other than his designation as "son of the seventh." Goitein, in his notes on this letter, cites Jacob Mann in explicating the reference to "the son of the seventh," as the relatively common "post or honorary title of the seventh [in the hierarchy] of the [scholarly] society."[92]

In addition to and quite distinct from donations, the record also preserves cases of internal fines, meaning one-time punishments for specific infractions. A major element in personal injury law in the traditions of both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, fines appear in medieval responsa from Spain, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Egypt and Western Europe.[93] In practice, this financial function is one of the most straightforward manifestations of the fiscal autonomy among a largely self-governing minority. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Byzantine Jews exercised their right to extract fines with remarkable vigor. Paltiel b. Ahimaʿaz, the author of the *Chronicle of Ahimaʿaz*, describes one such scene in which local Jews administered their own civil justice. The Rabbinical authorities in Bari sought to withhold the right of R. Hananel, one of the author's ancestors, to recover the booty that his family had lost in the Arab raid (in the year 925) on his home in Oria. Exchanging Talmudic arguments in a rabbinical court, the tribunal and R. Hananel came to a compromise whereby "they gave him the clothing and the Pentateuch [which he had recovered], and he waived the rest."[94] Essentially claiming eminent domain, the rabbinical court in Bari exercised authority, not only over property communally owned but also over that which clearly fell within the private sphere.

[92] T-S 13 J 21; Goitein, "A Letter of Historical Importance," 528, n. 8 (= Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia," 299), citing Mann, *Jews*, I, 83; 272, n. 2; 278.

Making a stronger connection to Byzantium, Gottheil and Worrell, *Fragments*, 149, citing Mann, *Jews*, I, 54, 264 (also note: I, 272, II, 374), encountered the following statement in a letter from the famed Byzantine Karaite Tobias b. Moses: "And I will order [the] second and [the] fifth to pronounce a blessing for my honored Lord in the synagogues" (ואתקן שיני וחמישי שיברכו לאדוני המכובד בבתי כנסיות). It is noteworthy that, while Mann deals with the numbered ranks, he does not apply them to this document.

Ankori, "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," 38, n. 150, cites Mann's explanation of the numerical ranks with respect to *this* text, in *Texts*, I, 374. Ankori, in this, the most thorough examination of Tobias' correspondence to date, agrees with Mann's reading of these numbers, as opposed to that of Gottheil and Worrell. Ankori proposes the following: "And I shall decree that every Monday and Thursday people should recite a blessing for my honored Lord in the synagogues."

[93] For Spain, see Isaac al-Fasi, *She'elot u-teshuvot Rabbenu Yishaq al-fasi*, ed. W. Leiter (Pittsburgh, 1954), no. 107, in which a man has to pay a fine for deciding to break his marriage contract. A telling responsum from the Babylonian compilation *Teshuvot ha-ge'onim sha'are sedeq*, ed. Nissim b. Hayyim Modaʿi (Jerusalem, 1966), vol. III, pt. 6, no. 19, prescribes that a fine be applied towards the redemption of captives. For Babylonian vs. Palestinian law, ibid., IV, pt. 1, no. 13, which discusses the differences in the application of the fine for the rupture of the marriage contract.

[94] Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 92 (Eng.), 18 (Heb.).

Despite this genuine exercise of Jewish self-government, the sources do not allow for an overstatement of the case. An apostate, for example, almost always suffered complete excommunication and simultaneous immunity from the community's jurisdiction, by virtue of his joining the dominant religion.[95] In a case in point, the Jewish community of Attaleia seized an apostate's property, which he subsequently redeemed by means of a petition to the Emperor Manuel I.[96] Naturally, the Byzantine government drew a firm line with respect to the Jews' power to impose economic sanctions. But despite these limits, the mere fact that the apostate was relegated to pleading his case before the emperor in the first place reveals a Jewish community well equipped to prosecute its interests and willing to take the initiative in doing so.[97]

Autonomous privilege brought with it the burden of self-reliance, and obligations of mutual aid took a constant toll on communal coffers. Based on the explicit commandment to redeem captives, the practice of paying off pirates or slave-traders taxed even the largest communities from Fustat to Eastern Europe and, indeed, throughout the Jewish world.[98] Jacob Mann and S. D. Goitein both illustrate, in numerous, moving cases, the role of Jewish communities in redeeming Jewish captives, often in concert.[99] So institutionalized was this practice, that it even figured in the aforementioned legend of the four captives, which purports to explain the tenth-century transplantation of Rabbinic learning from Baghdad to Spain by means of the capture and redemption of Iraqi sages.[100] From the point of

[95] De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 23, l. 17, published a business letter from Crete to Egypt regarding the sale of hides. The sale relies on the delivery of the goods, which was entrusted to a "priest, the son of the apostate woman" (הכומר בן המשומדת).

[96] Zepos and Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, I, 373f. (= Starr, *JBE*, 219, no. 167). For the parallel limitation in criminal law, see Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 81 (Eng.), 12 (Heb.), where Theophilus escapes the death penalty, which the Jewish community would have presumably (if utterly implausibly) imposed, on account of his conversion to Christianity. For further mention of the Jews in Attaleia, see above, chap. 2, n. 205. See also discussions of Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 156–7; Magdalino, *Manuel I*, 384–5 and Laiou, "Institutional Mechanisms," 170–1, on the jurisdiction of the "strategos of the strait" over the Jews, to whom Manuel refers. The implications from an economic perspective are unclear.

[97] Starr, *JBE*, 219, translates ἰουδαϊκόν as "synagogue," which must be understood in the fullest meaning of the word, not only as the locus, *par excellence*, of the Jewish community's functions, ritual and communal, but also as a metonym for the community, as I have interpreted it.

[98] B. Batra 8b; the Palestinian Talmud does not have as strong a statement about the importance of the redemption of captives, but it, too, refers to the phenomenon and particularly to the injunction against paying more than the fair market value of the captive, see below n. 102. Agus, *Urban Civilization*, I, 104ff.

[99] Mann, *Jews*, II, 87, 11. 15ff.; 91; 241, 11. 17–20; 289–91; 316–17, n. 5, and elsewhere. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 329–30; II, 1–155.

[100] See above, n. 69. S. Schechter, "Geniza Specimens," *JQR* 11 (1899): 643–6, argues for some kernel of truth in the legend, specifically insofar as the author of the Genizah letter in question, T-S 28.1, may be the same Hushi'el of the Abraham ibn Da'ud. It is, interestingly, the details of capture that Schechter least believes. The classic study is that of G. Cohen, "The Story of the Four Captives," *PAAJR* 29 (1960–1): 55–131.

view of the captors, the redemption of Jews offered a guaranteed source of income; more like kidnappers, the pirates offered Jews for ransom, knowing perfectly well that the Jewish communities would bear the burden of such a transaction.[101] Presumably, the Jews understood that payment to the captors merely encouraged future captivity. But this understanding also favored the Jews in that, to the degree that they were liable to be captured regardless of being Jewish, it was best to invest themselves with a certain value whereby their lives could be saved from irredeemable slavery or death. Also by law, however, Jews took great care not to pay an inflated price, lest they encourage even greater extortion.[102] One fragmentary Genizah letter refers to both Jewish and non-Jewish captives; some kind of exchange or barter takes place, based on the respective market values of the Jews and the "Greek slave."[103] The letter's author flatly refused the pirate's terms "[for] we would be incurring a cost prohibited by religious obligation, as our sages taught us: … '[one does not redeem] captives for more than their worth, to avoid encouraging the practice.'" Other scattered cases of redemption among Byzantine Jews confirm that, by and large, this arrangement suited both parties. Pirates could expect something approaching the generally accepted (though not fixed) market price of 33⅓ dinars per person, and the Jews availed themselves of businesslike dealings to guarantee the physical safety of their coreligionists.

A number of cases exist in which the Byzantine Jews were redeemed in Egypt and Baghdad; these examples, despite the consummate interest of the documents, address the issues of the Byzantine economy particularly insofar as the cost was passed on to the captives' home communities.[104] Indeed, this was the case when the Byzantine contingent within the Alexandrine Jewish community raised the funds for the redemption of a fellow Byzantine Jew.[105] Leo, resident in Alexandria, was sent by that community to Greece, probably to one of a number of towns named Marathea. He bore this letter, which functioned, according to custom, as

[101] Mann, *Jews*, I, 205. A customary price for captives (33⅓ dinars) shows how standardized the transaction was. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 329, points out, however, that the price was not entirely fixed. Great scholars could fetch more, as was the case in the legend of the four captives; for lesser prices, see Mann, *Jews*, I, 89, and below, n. 104.

[102] J. Gittin, chap. 4:6, halakha 6: "One does not pay for the redemption of captives beyond their value … nor does one help them escape, lest they [the captors] keep the remaining ones in chains."

[103] T-S 13 J 20.25r in Mann, *Jews*, I, 90–1, II, 88. Translated below, Appendix A, pp. 218–20.

[104] See Starr, *JBE*, 113 (= Isaac b. Moses, *'Or zaru'a*, ed. A. Lehren [Zhitomir, 1862], vol. II, 177b, no. 431); 186–7 (= MS Adler 2804 in Mann, *Jews*, II, 88–9, ll. 5ff.); 190–1 (Bodleian MS Heb. a. 3. fol. 28 [= 2873.28] in A. Cowley, "Bodleian Genizah Fragments IV," *JQR* 19 [1906]: 251–4, also in Mann, *Jews*, I, 88–90). More recently, Gil, "Between Two Worlds," 46.

[105] For the "Cretan Quarter" of Alexandria, see J. Blau and S. Hopkins, "Judeo-Arabic Letter," 431, l. 30.

the bearer's introduction and bona fides. Leo carried it on his way, as he raised funds for the redemption of his Byzantine-Jewish compatriot who found himself captive in Alexandria and conditionally redeemed by the local community.[106] And though this case is the only example of identifiably Byzantine Jews abroad taking up the burden of traveling back to the empire and seeking out funds, one might assume that this type of fund-raising occurred frequently, given the need to distribute the onerous cost of redemption.[107]

Prior to the tenth century, no direct evidence of redemption of Jews held captive in the empire has survived, even though longstanding Jewish law and one indirect reference allow us to presume such activity.[108] Only in the tenth century does the first case appear in which Byzantine Jews expressly fulfilled the commandment to redeem captive Jews. In the year 925, a boy named Shabbetai Donnolo, who was to become one of the leading scientific figures of Byzantine Italy, was carried off from Oria and later redeemed in Taranto. In his case, the redemption does not appear to have been communal, but rather based on his own family's ability to pay.[109] Alternatively, the family may have borrowed the money from the community – a likely possibility in light of the high cost of redemption.[110] Often the cost of redemption proved such a hardship that certain established individuals would stand surety, in their person, for the captives until they could raise the money. Such was the case of the Alexandrine community, which received Jewish travelers who were captured on a vessel that one or more Byzantine ships had plundered. The letter that describes the event also outlines the community's financial straits: "The year has ended [for us] in poverty, a difficult struggle for sustenance, diminution in means and Saracen violence.

[106] T-S 16.251, Mann, *Jews*, I, 92; II, 92–3, hypothesizes Mastaura, whereas the writing more properly reads מרתיה, i.e. Marathea; see N. Golb, "Some Words of Praise and a Query," *BJGS* 1 (1987): 7. Starr, *JBE*, 194, follows Mann in reading Mastaura. There is a Marathea north of Patras, on the Greek mainland, and another on the western coast of Asia Minor – the modern town of Kuşadası, on the ancient site of Marathesium.

[107] See the words of Maliha, below, n. 116.

[108] The earliest available case of redemption of Jews within the borders of the Byzantine state dates to the seventh century. Anastasios the Sinaite writes: "A certain seventeen-year-old youth, who had been rescued from captivity in the east [Asia Minor] … requested … to become a Christian." Joshua Starr concludes that this text refers to a Jewish boy because it appears to be part of the previous story, which relates to a Jewish sorcerer, but the language of the text, referring as it does to a "certain" boy, leaves room for doubt, and forces reliance on other, later reports for less ambiguous examples. From trans. by Starr, *JBE*, 85–6, of F. Nau, ed., "Le texte grec des récits utiles à l'âme d'Anastase (le Sinaïte)," *Oriens Christianus* 3 (1903), 71.

[109] Starr, *JBE*, 149; Sh. Donnolo, *Sefer Hakhmoni* [*Il commento di Sabbetai Donnolo sul libro della creazione*], ed. D. Castelli (Florence, 1880; repr. Jerusalem 1962), in *Sefer yesirah* (Jerusalem, 1965), 123.

[110] Cf. below, n. 111.

Moreover, the governors of this city are hounding us on account of the arrival of three captives … " whom they maintained for a month, despite their difficulties.[111] The simple magnitude of the expense forced Jewish communities to cooperate and pool their resources over great distances.[112]

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, more sources describe the redemption, in Constantinople, of Jews from far-flung lands. The local community contributed proceeds from their funds specially dedicated to this purpose. A responsum from Mainz recounts a convoluted tale of two boys captured in Poland, one of whom the captors took to Constantinople, where a local Jew redeemed him.[113] In another case, two Toledan Jews were taken captive in Byzantium and eventually ransomed.[114] In an interesting Judeo-Arabic letter from Jerusalem, Simon b. Saul recounts to his sister in Toledo an episode, in which a couple fell prey to sectarian politics.[115] The husband, a secret Karaite, and his wife, a Rabbanite, were captured en route to Palestine and eventually ransomed in Byzantium.

The redemption of captives by Byzantine Jews reflects not only the religious imperative but also the simple fact of Constantinople's prominence, which must have placed the city's Jews in the middle of this onerous but ubiquitous trade. The aforementioned Maliha routinely saw Byzantine families arrive from far and wide, to redeem their loved ones. She chastises her brothers, goading them with the fact that "when men from the communities of Byzantium are taken captive, their relatives go to ransom them. So why should not one of you risk his life to come for me?"[116]

Financially and administratively associated with the redemption of captives, but a result of different social conditions, the Jewish commandment to take care of the poor is as old as the Bible itself.[117] The Byzantine Jews, given their ancient and highly developed synagogue structure, undoubtedly fulfilled this obligation. The sources, however, do not elaborate on the mechanics of almsgiving, just as they fail to give a detailed picture of synagogue management in the first place. They merely depict wealthy men who contributed out of individual piety, as was the case with R. Hananel in the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*, or they describe the inclusion of

[111] T-S 12.338 in Mann, *Jews*, II, 241, ll. 15ff. [112] Ibid., I, 204.

[113] Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi, *Sefer Rabiah*, ed. V. Aptowitzer (Jerusalem, 1938), 451 and Isaac b. Moses of Vienna, *'Or zaru'a* I, no. 694, translated in Agus, *Urban Civilization*, 104ff.; S. Assaf, "Slaves and Slave Trade among the Jews in the Middle Ages," *Zion* 4, 5 (1938, 1939): 106, n. 104.

[114] *Sefer Rabiah*, 451; see also E. Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain* (Philadelphia, 1979), vol. II, 227.

[115] T-S 13 J 9.4, in E. Ashtor, "Documentos españoles de la Genizah," *Sefarad* 24 (1964): 7–19. For another case, see Assaf, "Slaves and Slave Trade," 115, n. 12, referring to T-S Misc. 35, no. 8.

[116] T-S 13 J 11.4; Mann, *Jews*, II, 306 (= Starr, *JBE*, 214). Mentioned above, p. 69.

[117] E.g. Lev. 19:9–10, Deut. 14:29, 15:9–10.

the poor in the celebration of a communal feast.[118] Whereas the urgent nature of the redemption of captives inspired a fuller description of the actual workings of those fund-raising efforts, the mundane and continual duty of caring for the poor appears to have attracted little note. Still, the testimony, such as it is, suffices to illustrate the economic moment of these key ethical commitments.[119]

CONTRACTS

Growing out of the rabbinic legal system taught in the academies, contracts and business agreements served a series of essential economic functions within Jewish society everywhere. Inheritors of this highly ramified and ancient tradition of contractual law, the Jews enjoyed wide-ranging self-governance in the creation and enforcement of their intra-Jewish financial agreements, as manifest in the contracts themselves and in the legal decisions of the rabbis known as responsa. The majority of civil litigation preserved in documents throughout the Jewish Mediterranean deals with three broad categories of contractual relationships: marriage and divorce, inheritance, and business dealings. All three of these contract types, including marriage and divorce, functioned primarily as financial agreements, and therefore speak particularly eloquently to the overarching social consequence of the inner economy.[120] These contracts represent, by their very existence, an independent, Hebraic system of fiscal exchanges, while the principals involved, hailing as they do from both the Byzantine Empire and beyond, demonstrate the international breadth of their application.

The bedrock of all social contracts, marriage, intertwined two pressing concerns: the propagation of the Jewish family and the transfer of property. This latter, economic element comes through clearly in the wording of the marriage contract (*ketubbah*, pl. *ketubbot*), and imbues the transfer of property with the higher familial purpose, as the husband promises "to provide, to maintain, and to clothe" the bride.[121] Similarly intended to provide economic stability to the family, but more crudely stated, a standard section in all marriage contracts also describes the dowry, which functions

[118] Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 80 (Eng.), 12 (Heb.), 177 and notes (= Starr, *JBE*, 133).

[119] The abundant information on charity in the Cairo Genizah has been deeply studied by Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, III, 112–20, and Bareket, *Fustat*. The customs and procedures described, relating mainly to the Jews of Egypt, were probably paradigmatic.

[120] De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 240, l. 194, translates a commentary on Hosea, in which the biblical verse 3:2 "I bought for myself a woman for fifteen silver pieces" is glossed as "I took her to be my a wife with fifteen silver pieces."

[121] M. Friedman, *Jewish Marriage in Palestine*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv and New York, 1980–1), vol I, 78.

as the heart of the transfer and stipulates the precise terms and conditions of the couple's capital investment in the marriage. In addition to the fixed sum (*mohar*) which the husband contributes, the woman and the man agree to bring property and money to the marriage; the *ketubbah* enumerates those contributions, all of which revert to the woman in the case of widowhood or divorce. Filled with this type of information, the few Byzantine *ketubbot* that have survived provide valuable insight into the economics of Byzantine-Jewish marriage and the social reality that it reflects.[122]

The *ketubbot* in question, dated to the eleventh century (and perhaps as early as the tenth), belong to Jews of at least moderate means, and may or may not represent the general population.[123] At the very least, the impression of relative affluence corresponds with the general economic climate of the period and with the Jews' apparent success within it.[124] The best-preserved specimen of the Byzantine *ketubbah*, from the city of Mastaura and dated to the year 1022, includes significant sums of gold, in addition to very popular and expensive textiles such as silk, the value of which rendered it almost like currency and which often passed from generation to generation.[125] The total value of the contract comes to the price of $35\frac{1}{3}$ gold pieces.[126]

Beyond providing data on Jewish economic standing, other *ketubbot* also serve as an economic lens for the examination of two key questions of Byzantine-Jewish history: the dual allegiance to Babylonian and Palestinian traditions, and Jewish communal autonomy. In regard to dual orientation of contractual formulas, the surviving marriage contracts are mixed, even if, in the final analysis, they are also inconclusive by virtue of their paucity.

[122] An interesting exposition of marriage contracts as the primary tool for defining and perpetuating patrimony is presented by D. Simon, "Vertragliche Weitergabe des Familiensvermögens in Byzanz," in *Hommes et richesses*, ed. C. Abadie-Reynal *et al.*, II, 181–96.

[123] Jacoby, "Byzantine Asia Minor," 85, believes the value of the *ketubbah* from Mastaura, which totalled 35⅓ nomismata, to be a rather small sum, and he thought it represented comparatively humble means among the Jews. Contrast to Starr, *JBE*, 45, who saw that sum, which did not include real property, to be relatively high.

[124] For comments on the wealth represented in *ketubbot*, see: Goitein, "A Letter of Historical Importance," 529, commentary on ll. 11–15. T-S 13 J 21; J. Starr, *Romania: the Jewries of the Levant after the Fourth Crusade* (Paris, 1949), 17–19; Starr, *JBE*, 187–90; Reinach, "Un contrat de mariage," I, 118–32.

[125] T-S 16.374. See de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 1; Mann, *Jews*, II, 94–6; Starr, *JBE*, 187–90. Friedman, *Marriage*, I, 43–4, n. 102, describes this Mastauran *ketubbah* as Babylonian. In addition, he claims that "there is no data presently available … [that] there was one [single] Byzantine-Palestinian *ketubbah* type." Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 101, points out the value of silk and how it was passed down from generation to generation. See also Goitein, "A Letter of Historical Importance," 523, n. 15; 529 and commentary on ll. 11–15.

[126] De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 6.

Taken as they are, the available *ketubbot* point to something of a hybrid – perhaps a varied – tradition.[127] The salient characteristics of the Palestinian *ketubbah* include: dating the document from the destruction of the Temple (as opposed to, or in addition to, *anno mundi*); the inclusion of a Hebrew clause in which the woman promises to "serve and honor [her husband] in modesty and in purity and in cleanliness"; and the calculation of the *mohar*, a traditional and fixed sum of 200 *zuz*, at $8\frac{1}{3}$ dinars.[128] These Palestinian-styled elements, together with the more popular Babylonian formulas, sometimes in hybrid fashion, appear in the few Byzantine examples available. The marriage contract from Mastaura establishes the date in the Babylonian mode of *anno mundi*, but calculates, as per Palestinian tradition, the dowry of 200 *zuz* at $8\frac{1}{3}$ dinars. Another *ketubbah*, of contested origin, is linked to Byzantium by virtue of the use of the Greek word ἀκωλύτως spelled out in Hebrew letters, 'AQWLYṬWS, meaning "in good order."[129] Later medieval *ketubbot* from Italy and western Greece conserve this

[127] One example of the tenuousness of the evidence is a Palestinian-style *ketubbah* of uncertain origin, from either the tenth or eleventh century, which may be from Byzantium on the basis of the possible reading of its place of origin as "[Qonstanti]ny metropolis." The debate as to the whether or not this document hails from Byzantine territory has not been resolved. Mordechai Friedman, who published the *ketubbah*, relates, but ultimately disagrees with, Norman Golb's suggestion that the contract may indeed be Byzantine. Golb refers to the fact that the city of origin may be Constantinople, with which two extant consonants could indeed match. Friedman believes it to be a major city, "metropolis" in Syria or Palestine, by analogy to the Aramaic *ketubbah* from "Tiberia colon[ia]," published by him, Friedman, *Marriage*, II, 208ff., see also, II, 80–8.

[128] For further discussion on the date, see Assaf, "Family Life," 54, n. 1, quoting Isaiah of Trani (*JQR* 4: 97): "In our mariage contracts, we write in this manner: 'on day so-and-so of the month so-and-so, in the year so-and-so, anno mundi, and year so-and-so since the destruction of the Temple' …" Cf. Mann, *Jews*, II, 96, 94, and Schechter, "Notes on Hebrew MSS," 97. See also Friedman, *Marriage*, I, 39–44, 255. The translation of the *mohar* into 8⅓ dinars provides a link between Byzantine and Palestinian *ketubbot*, even when, in other respects, they are Babylonian.

In the Land of Israel they would date *anno mundi*, and sometimes also by the Seleucid dating, the so-called "dating for contracts." In North Africa and Egypt, they mostly relied on the Seleucid dating. Presumably in Byzantine and southern Italy, they used both *anno mundi* and the date from the destruction of the Temple. See Mann, *Jews*, II, 96, for dating formulas in which dating from the destruction of the Second Temple is standard. However, in Mann, *Jews*, II, 94 (the above-mentioned Mastauran *ketubbah*), only *anno mundi* appears. For discussion see: S. Assaf, "Old Genizah Documents from Palestine, Egypt and North Africa" (Heb.), *Tarbiz* 9, no. 1 (1939): 54, n. 1; Schechter, "Notes on Hebrew MSS," 97. In the famous 1022 *ketubbah* from Mastaura, with respect to the dating, we have the exception to what Assaf considers to be the Byzantine form of dating, namely *anno mundi* in addition to the date from the destruction of the Temple. Here, in the first lines of the *ketubbah*, we have only *anno mundi*.

[129] See discussion on the Greek word in de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 8 and accompanying notes. Friedman, *Marriage*, I, 44, n. 102, II, 364–6, disagrees with Mann, *Jews*, II, 96, n. 2, and with M. Gil, "The Term *Aqolithos* in Medieval Jewish Deeds," *JNES* 32 (1973): 319. Friedman argues his point on the basis of paleographical comparison with three manuscripts of the same hand, which he believes to hail from Tyre. In fact, the two opinions need not exclude one another; a scribe in Tyre could easily have provided a marriage contract for a couple including at least one Byzantine Jew.

combination of Babylonian and Palestinian qualities, which mirror the mixture of influences in the Byzantine academic investments.[130]

Marriage and its flip-side, divorce, also took center-stage in rare cases of Byzantine state interference in internal Jewish affairs, hinting at the limits of Jewish autonomy. Traditionally, Jewish authorities categorically refused to condone recourse to non-Jewish courts in communal matters, but a series of financial, legal and cultural characteristics of Byzantine-Jewish marriage conspired to crack open opportunities for precisely such action. One scenario in particular, namely, divorce initiated by the woman, raised almost insuperable difficulties from the point of view of Jewish law, which led the Byzantine rabbinic authorities to accept Christian jurisdiction.[131]

Both uniquely Byzantine-Jewish practices and Jewish law in general engendered all manner of difficulties related to Jewish divorce or the threat of it. First of all, Byzantine women maintained control over their marriage investment throughout their lives, a condition unique in the Jewish world. R. Jacob ibn Habib, a Spanish exile who ended up in Salonica, noted with surprise that Byzantine women managed their dowry throughout the marriage, without necessarily having survived or divorced their husbands.[132] A second comparative advantage for the Byzantine wife's estate concerned her heirs. According to the standard division of wealth among most Jewish communities, the estate of a deceased, childless woman reverted in part to her widower and in part to her father's household.[133] In Byzantium, however, according to Isaiah of Trani, "the husband does not inherit from the wife," meaning that her entire estate reverts to her father's household. And though Isaiah ultimately overruled – or attempted to overrule – this Byzantine tradition, his decision, combined with the comment of Jacob ibn

[130] See Jacoby, "Byzantine Asia Minor," 86–7. On divorce, see Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 212–13: A reference to a bill of divorce connects southern Italian Otranto with the empire as late as the beginning of the thirteenth century, as the principals try to work out the mechanics of a long-distance divorce among Otranto, Dyrrachium and an unnamed place in "Romaniyah."

[131] Elsewhere in the Jewish world, particularly Western Europe, this type of reference to non-Jewish courts for the purposes of resolving purely internal questions, such as marriage, was anathema, and closely associated with informing; see Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, 150–60.

[132] Assaf, "Family Life," 103, n. 23, citing H. J. D. Azulai and D. Fränkel, *Zera' 'anashim* (Gusiatin, Ukriane, 1902), no. 43. For Byzantine *ketubbot* as compared to others, see Assaf, "Family Life," 98. Assaf points out the fact that the Byzantine Jews differed from other communities in a few points of law. For example, Assaf (pp. 99–100, esp. n. 4) explains how the couple could have sex after the engagement (which included the Seven Blessings), though the couple was not considered married insofar as the bride was not fully "transferred" over to her husband's jurisdiction from her father's. See also Isaiah the Elder of Trani, *Teshuvot ha-Rid*, 219, no. 47; Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 125.

[133] Assaf, "Family Life," 103, nn. 26–7.

Habib, confirms the uniquely strong position of Byzantine-Jewish women in the matters of their estate.[134]

These advantages in Byzantine custom contrasted starkly to other, distinctly disadvantageous conditions, which applied to married women throughout the Jewish world, including Byzantium. To wit: Jewish divorce remained the exclusive prerogative of the man, though Jewish courts might attempt to threaten or physically force men to accede to a divorce.[135] The term *agunah* (pl. *agunot*), or "anchored woman," refers to the woman trapped in a non-functioning marriage; she can neither remarry nor bear legitimate children from another union, nor does she benefit from the guarantees of livelihood that a proper husband owes her in fulfillment of his marriage contract.[136] Only by pro-active legal maneuverings did rabbinical authorities manage to grant divorces to those women who were either abandoned by their husbands or simply unable to obtain a divorce from them. Even then, *agunot* faced extraordinary – usually insurmountable – challenges in their search for marriageable status.

The relative empowerment of women in the Byzantine tradition lay in stark tension with this broader legal principle whereby only men might initiate divorce. This tension occasioned conflict among all the parties: the husband, the wife, their respective familes and the Jewish community eager to maintain its jurisdiction. Unfortunately, yet another factor further contributed to the potential for, and aggravated, marital conflict: child marriage.[137] The youth of the wife increased the chances for divorce, insofar as a young girl might easily fear or resent marriage and insofar as her parents

[134] Ibid., 103–4; Isaiah of Trani, *Teshuovt ha-Rid*, 331, no. 65. Isaiah of Trani is one of the foremost authorities on family law, and he had other occasions to accuse the Byzantine Jews of impropriety. Cf. A. Andréadès, "The Jews in the Byzantine Empire," 20, notes; and Andréadés, "Les Juifs et le fisc dans l'empire byzantin," in *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930), I, 7–29.

These uniquely Byzantine traditions may be chalked up to a number of influences, none definitive. In Karaite *ketubbot*, the husband was limited in his usufruct of the dowry, in contrast to those of the Rabbanites. See S. D. Goitein, "The Jewish Family," in *Gli Ebrei nell'alto medioevo*, 723. Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 123, 215, no. 9. The same source is cited in Starr, *Romania*, 18; and in Assaf, "Family Life," 105–6. Byzantine law, according to the Ecloga of Leo III, requires that the husband inherit only one quarter of his wife's estate if she should die before him, while the remainder goes to whomever she designates. Of course, in the case of the husband's prior death, the entire marriage contract reverts to her power, see E. H. Freshfield (trans.), *A Manual of Roman Law: The Ecloga* (Cambridge, 1926), 72–4.

[135] J Ket. 31d (= 47a); B. Ket 77a; *Mishneh Torah*, Gerushin 2.20.

[136] "I shall serve, cherish, provide for and maintain you as Jewish men are expected to do." Mann, *Jews*, II, 94.

[137] Isaiah of Trani writes concerning a four-year-old an *agunah* while in another case, a man left his wife, who was five years old, and went off to "Romania." In yet another case, due to the confusion between marriage and engagement, one man attempted to leave his "betrothed," raising the question of whether a father can accept a writ of divorce on behalf of his minor daughter. Despite the fact that the

might still act as de facto guardians over her, even after marriage.[138] Under such circumstances, the woman or girl might seek a divorce by resorting to the Christian courts, but such recourse potentially cast aspersions on the divorce's legitimacy from the point of view of the Jewish community, effectively defeating the purpose of pursuing the divorce in the first place.[139] So, in response to the grave implications of these imperfectly defunct unions, the Byzantine rabbis accepted the legality of a divorce procured in state courts. In so doing, they forced the hand of their Babylonian colleagues, who felt compelled to preempt this local legal initiative by validating those divorces on their own authority.[140]

Nevertheless, divorce under Byzantine auspices, even though co-opted by Jewish authorities, still undermined Jewish self-governance, so that eminent Babylonian authorities felt obligated to try to stem it. Thus, they ruled that a woman who sought divorce from gentile courts was considered a "rebellious wife." The "rebellious wife" is the legal category for a woman who ceases marital relations in an effort to force a divorce. Once declared a "rebellious wife," the woman can often obtain a divorce, but she forfeits the property in her *ketubbah*, which would otherwise revert to her in a proper

couple had had sexual relations (which normally constitutes, in and of itself, the bond of marriage, according to the Mishnah, Qid. I.1), the girl had not officially married the man, and was therefore in the custody of her father. From *Teshuvot ha-Rid*, no. 47 and MS cambridge 474, 28b and 37a, as quoted by Assaf, "Family Life," 99–100, n. 2, and translated by Bowman. On the relation between Byzantine Christian society and child marriage, see also Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 122–3, n. 67, 211–13, no. 7; and above, n. 132.

The *Chronicle of Ahima'az* describes another case describing the cultural norm of child marriage: "R. Shefatiah had a very beautiful daughter named Kassia. Her father wished to marry her off, but her mother did not … One night, as R. Shefatiah was about to recite his prayers, as was his wont … his daughter descended from her bed and, clad only in her night-gown, stood before him … He observed that 'the pomegranates had budded,' and that she had arrived at marriageable age." Clearly, the father had intended to marry his daughter off, even before he noticed the telltale signs of puberty. See Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 82–3 (Eng.), 13–14 (Heb.).

[138] MS Camb. Add. 474, published by Schechter, "Notes on Hebrew MSS.," 91, referring to fol. 49a; Assaf, "Family Life," 99, n. 4; A. Grossman, *Pious and Rebellious: Jewish Women in Medieval Europe*, trans. A. Chipman (Waltham, Mass., 2004), 46–8.

[139] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Gerushin 2.20ff.

[140] "Regarding the situation in the land of Greece (*Yavan*) [regarding] which you wrote me that they force the son-in-law to give a writ of divorce by means of the non-Jewish courts … we have already seen in a responsum of the Geonim that the rabbis considered it [technically sound] following Ravina and Rav Ashi, when they realized that Jewish women would go and rely on the gentile [authorities] to extend them writs by force … They decreed it in the days of Mar Ravah bar Mar Rav Huna, may he rest in peace, that they [the Jewish courts] could force the husbands … and we have been accustomed to doing this for about 300 years and more, so do likewise. Thus responded R. Sherira Gaon, and so we have found in the responsa of a number of Geonim." Schechter, "Notes on Hebrew MSS," 91; see above, n. 138; Schechter, p. 100, citing folio 46b, reveals how, in another case, the Geonim in Babylon resented similar recourse to non-Jewish courts and sought to preempt it, but the very complaint reveals that the Byzantine-Jewish women still availed themselves of gentile authorities to obtain divorces.

divorce.[141] The rabbis invoked this legal status in order to remove the woman's financial incentive to divorce, again, in order to preserve the transfer of property among families and to maintain the family structure. Another means of limiting divorce was to approach the problem from the point of view of conflict of interest. If a young wife's parents pushed for the divorce for their own reasons, then the divorce remained invalid, even if obtained in Jewish courts.[142] This disqualification originated in the fact that, according to Byzantine Jewish law, the parents had a vested interest in the marriage and perhaps in its termination, insofar as they would regain the entire value of the *ketubbah* upon divorce.

These attempts to limit both the nature and frequency of divorce betray the problems caused by the prevailing conditions of Byzantine-Jewish marriage, namely, the women's control of the *ketubbah* in life, the prominent rights of her family after her death, the difficulties inherent in the initiation of Jewish divorce, and the phenomenon of child marriage. Indeed, it is not surprising that, under certain circumstances, men allowed themselves to be bought off, something of which Isaiah of Trani angrily accuses the Greek Jews. In such a case, the suborned man would simply allow gentile courts to force him to divorce his wife, in exchange for which he would receive an agreed-upon sum from his erstwhile in-laws.[143] All told, Byzantine-Jewish women and their advocates had a clear incentive to seek the legal protection of the state, even if they did so out of deference to the Jewishly defined problem and not to the Byzantine courts themselves. As a consequence of this complex situation, the Jews ceded not only a degree of self-governance but also, more pointedly, self-governance in a realm close to home and otherwise unrelated to their role as Byzantine subjects.[144]

Though more scantily preserved and structurally more complicated than marriage contracts, business contracts almost certainly held prominent place in the day-to-day workings of Jewish life. Admittedly, a certain portion of business took place without the formal protections of a written agreement.

[141] *Teshuvot ha-ge'onim sha'are sedeq*, 56a, no. 15, apud B.-Z. Dinur, *Yisra'el ba-golah* (Tel Aviv, 1958), vol. I, pt. 2, 127.

[142] Assaf, "Family Life," 105, nn. 35, 36.

[143] Ibid., 99, n. 4; Schechter, "Notes on Hebrew MSS," 100; excerpted and translated in Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 216. See also, for a general look at the economic role in the success and failure of marriage, Goitein, "The Jewish Family," 729–30.

[144] The above-described complex of problems has plagued Jewish courts since the Mishnah and Tosefta themselves, which dedicate an entire tractate to detailing the requirements for a valid writ of divorce, lest women unnecessarily find themselves in a state of limbo. R. Gershom "the Light of the Exile" banned polygyny and regulated certain aspects of divorce to defend women's rights in marriage; for an historical exposition of this phenomenon, see Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, 21–35. On Jews seeking recourse in the Muslim courts, Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 251–2.

However, large purchases of imported goods, as well as exchanges based on contingencies and other potential complications, required a contract, which either guaranteed a sale or a loan or disavowed any further claims against a given party. If the *ketubbot* reveal a surprising point of interaction between Byzantine and Jewish courts, the few extant quitclaims and wills bring the quotidian reality of the inner economy to life, most notably in the *absence* of reference to the Byzantine authorities.

One group of quitclaims, though dated to the beginning of the late Byzantine period, offers an invaluable example of the utility of contracts, as well as a demonstration of the significant monetary value of written material. The remarkable aforementioned partial-Bible boasts a series of colophons that record its own journey.[145] These colophons attest to each of the Bible's various purchases and function as a receipt of transfer from one owner to the next. The first colophon/receipt is the longest and most involved.[146] It describes how Caleb b. Shabbetai inherited a partial-Bible from his mother and how, burdened with debt, he sought to sell it to appease his creditors. Since Caleb owned only one half of the partial-Bible, he and the other owner, his uncle, physically divided it into two parts, with Caleb selling it to someone named Solomon b. Joseph. At this point, the extant half of the Bible remained with Caleb's uncle, Abraham b. R. Shabbetai. The colophon then goes on to explain that Abraham subsequently sold his half of the partial-Bible (including the Pentateuch through II Kings) for 250 dirhems, also to Solomon b. Joseph.[147] Ending here, this first colophon/receipt thus establishes Solomon's ownership. In the second colophon of the same partial-Bible, the seller, Moses b. Solomon, explains that he inherited the Bible from his father, Solomon b. Joseph, who had bought the Bible. The receipt further states that Moses sold the partial-Bible and that he renounces any further claims against the new buyer, Nathaniel b. Nissi.[148] This time around, the partial-Bible fetched a price equivalent to 375 silver pieces.[149]

The formulaic nature of this and other contracts exemplifies how they facilitated even the most mundane transactions and transfers, establishing the basic data essential to the business at hand: the date and place of the transaction, the identity of the principals and the property in question. The text of this partial-Bible provides an example of a typical Hebrew receipt-of-sale:

[145] See above, pp. 97–8. [146] Mann, *Texts*, I, 52, no. 1; Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 222–4.
[147] For the coinage, see Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 224, n. 6.
[148] Ibid., 227–8. [149] Ibid.

A record of the testimony which was given before us, the undersigned, on the … day [of the week, in the month of] Adar, on the fourteenth of the month, in the year 5012 from the Creation of the World.[150] On this very day, Caleb b. Shabbetai came before the court with his mother's brother, Abraham b. R. Shabbetai, on account of the fact that they owned [jointly, a Bible, which came by way of inheritance] to the mother of said Caleb and to Abraham b. R. Shabbetai …[151]

Unlike Palestinian and Babylonian *ketubbot*, which are distinguishable by certain differences in their formulas, common Byzantine business contracts appear to have very little to distinguish them from those of other communities. All that remains for identification is paleographic analysis and the presence of nouns, proper and common, that come from contemporary Greek. In the case of the partial-Bible, the name Evdokia, Caleb's mother, indicates Byzantine origin; the name Caleb, though Hebrew and theoretically applicable to Jews the world over, was also common among Byzantine men.[152]

The same criteria apply to the identification of wills, another fundamental type of contract. The example of Abu'l-Hasan, who died in Seleucia or Constantinople, provides a striking example of the overlap between the use of contracts and wills in their basic role as deeds of transfer and, by extension, as assets in and of themselves. Abu'l-Hasan's estate included "money, clothes and contracts," conferring on those contracts the quality of a transferable deed or a valid claim. The bequeathal of such contracts occasionally comes up in the Genizah as the principal asset of a decedent, as was the case with Abu'l-Hasan, and might represent equity in a partnership or loan.[153] The only other attestation of a will involving Byzantine principals comes from Spain, in which case the aforementioned Mallorcan Jew bequeathed his books to his sister, who lived in Constantinople.[154]

SCROLLS AND SCRIBES

Just as interesting as the content of contracts, but less thoroughly considered, is the economic role of those whose profession included the writing

[150] = 1252 CE.

[151] Mann, *Texts*, II, 52, ll. 1–8. Cf. p. 54, for the second colophon, which, naturally, is very similar. Both are translated in Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 222–4, 227–8. For non-Byzantine contract formularies, see Rivlin, *Shitre Kehilat Alicena*. The words in brackets reflect Mann's filling out of the text.

[152] Cf. T-S 8 J 19.33, published by de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 1–15, 17–19. See also the index of Greek proper names on p. 466. For Caleb as a Byzantine name, Dinur, *Yisra'el ba-Golah*, pt. 2, index s.v. כלב. It is not clear where the family actually lived.

[153] T-S 13 J 21, in Goitein, "A Letter of Historical Importance," 533 and commentary.

[154] See above, n. 74.

of such documents, as well as religious and secular books. Any Jewish society requires a scribal class, educated in Hebrew and able to tailor standardized contractual formulas to the specific needs of a given transaction.[155] In the spiritual and cultural realms, the ritual use of Pentateuchal scrolls, as well as the composition and purchase of literature in Hebrew and other languages, demanded parchment, paper, ink, and scribes dedicated to drafting and copying.[156] The cost of these services is difficult to determine, even in the realm of Christian copying, though it clearly constituted a significant portion of a book's cost.[157] Finally, besides the specialized labor, or partly owing to it, books themselves enjoyed great value and were the object of trade everywhere.[158] In the contemporary sources, both the cultural value of books and their value as a commodity coalesce and form a central component of the exclusively Jewish economy.

Analogy with Jewish communities all over the world renders obvious the fact that scribes were regularly employed in the copying of scrolls of the Bible for Byzantine synagogues and academies.[159] Communities required the services of experienced scribes who copied not only the Pentateuch but also the five *Megillot* (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther) and the sections of the Prophets that accompany the Sabbath and Holiday readings of the Law. Naturally, this demand characterized both Karaite and Rabbanite communities, and as such, this constant and costly scribal employment accounts for one of the truly universal services in the Jewish world, not only in Byzantium. This religious use of the books intersected with their commoditization when they constituted pious donations. Thus, one Torah scroll, with a colophon from the year 1188, recounts that a Constantinopolitan donor, Daniel bar Nathan, purchased it from the community of Trebizond and gave it to the Karaite community of an

[155] A. Graboïs, "The Use of Letters as a Communication Medium among Medieval European Jewish Communities," in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora*, ed. S. Menache (Leiden, 1996), 103.

[156] On the economic and social value and role of books in the Jewish community, see S. Assaf, *The People of the Book and the Book* (Safed, 1964) and A. Freimann, "Jewish Scribes in Medieval Italy," *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1950), 232; Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 129–64.

[157] V. Kravari, "Note sur le prix des manuscripts (IXe–XVe siècle)," in *Hommes et richesses*, ed. C. Abadie-Reynal *et al.,* I, 375–84, esp. 379 and 381, where the variance in price is as notable as the expense of the high end, such as 21 dinars, or two thirds of the contemporary cost of the redemption of a captive.

[158] Morrisson and Cheynet, "Prices and Wages in the Byzantine World," 857: "Books also belonged within the category of precious objects and were valued at between one and ten gold pieces." See also, N. Oikonomides, "Writing Materials, Documents, and Books," *EHB*, 589–92; Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 194–5.

[159] On scribal products in the Genizah community, see Kraemer, "A Jewish Cult of the Saints," 579–601: 592.

unidentified town called GWRYYL.[160] In the same vein, a series of Karaite colophons from the St Petersburg Genizah collection reveal how the value of the books, as manifest in the language of their dedications, lent a contractual quality to the act of their donation.[161] Even though individual scribes were notoriously poorly remunerated, the copying of Torah scrolls required a great deal of time, materials and training, all of which rendered its production a major investment, with the result, in turn, of enhancing the merit of the donor.[162] Thus the economy of material and professional value translated, in some measure, to religious value.

The use of Biblical manuscripts was not limited to the public sphere, though their high cost and communal use favored that market. The above-cited series of Byzantine colophons written on the back of a partial-Bible follows the book from private owner to private owner.[163] The last sale dates from the year 1265, in the city of QAL'A'ASHER, where Benjamin b. Solomon sold this partial-Bible to Nathaniel b. Nissi for the price of "250 silver coins plus fifty in the coins of Cordova."[164] Presumably, this manuscript served as a study Bible, for use in preparation of the weekly Torah reading, according to the traditional injunction to prepare the week's portion "twice in Hebrew and once in translation."[165] Ultimately, however, even this Bible manuscript ended up in the public sphere, since its last recorded owners dedicated it to the local synagogue of an unnamed community.[166]

A similar colophon in nature, although decidedly simpler in detail, explains the fate of another Byzantine Bible. The inscription reads:

[160] גוריל: Ankori, *Karaites*, 123, nn. 130–3; The colophon was first published by Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 136, corresponding to scroll no. 88. Trebizond is spelled טירפזין (ṬYRPZYN). See also the scribe Eleazar b. Hanukkah, copyist of scroll; Nicholas de Lange, "Jewish Education," 25, citing A. Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1886–1906), no. 2616.4 (= Bodleian MS Heb. c. 6).

[161] Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, 131–8, passim.

[162] On the low wages of scribes, see Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, II, 237–8; on the presence of poor *Rum*, i.e., Byzantine, scribes in Jewish Fustat, see ibid., I, 51; and on scribes in general, ibid., II, 228–40.

[163] See above, p. 111.

[164] קלעאשר: Mann, *Texts*, I, 47, 54. For the coins, see ibid., 54, or Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 227–8, where the translation continues, "50 coins of Cordova, at the current merchant value are half, i.e., 125 aspers." Bowman also argues for locating this place, *Qal'a'sher*, in one of three cities in Anatolia: Afyūn, Konya or Niğde. A fourteenth-century MS in Parma's de Rossi collection, no. 648 (= 2031), 48r (i.e., the last folio) contains two references to Barcelonian dinars: דינרין ברצלוני.

[165] B. Ber. 8a.

[166] "This partial-Bible did Jacob and his brother R. Isaac dedicate, in memory of their mother, Hannah b. Abraham … " Mann, *Texts*, I, 55. Cf. above, n. 87.

I, Shabbetai son of R. Elijah, sold the [present manuscript, including] the Pentateuch and Five Scrolls to R. Micha[el] of śṭplyś, which is a place in Italy … for three dinars KIRṬA', so that he might transp[ort] the Bible] to his nephew, Mar Judah son of Mar Shabbetai. May the Lord grant him the merit to study …[167]

Similar to the prior example, this Bible reflects the nexus of the personal use of Scriptural manuscripts and their commoditization. Regarding the identity of the coins and the provenance of R. Michael, Jacob Mann, who merely publishes the text in passing, refrains from coming to any conclusions. Perhaps the coin's name KIRṬA' represents a corruption or Aramaization of the silver coin called *qirat* in Arabic.[168] The identity of R. Michael's hometown poses even more difficult problems, as no city stands out as a convincing candidate for the Hebrew *ŚṬPYLŚ*.[169]

Bibles, though very valuable and ritually essential, constitute only one body of Jewish literature. An entire corpus of Rabbinics and commentary is also represented among the Byzantine manuscripts. Thus, in addition to a Greek translation of Ecclesiastes, the Cairo Genizah has also preserved Biblical commentaries, Greek scholia on the Pentateuch and a Hebrew–Greek Mishnaic glossary.[170] Although the content of these and other texts provides no economic information, their existence supplements the evidence regarding academic institutions within the empire, for books naturally constituted one of the principal expenses of scholarship. In this extra-Biblical genre, the work titled *Horayat ha-qore'* bears a difficult but tantalizing colophon:

This is the book titled *Horayat ha-qore'* which was brought from Jerusalem to Bar[i] by the most direct route. Joseph b. Hiyya the scribe brought it thence,

[167] Bodl. 2615[14], in Mann, *Texts*, I, 47. śṬPLYś (שטפליש): One possible meaning is εἴς τὴ(ν) πόλις, with a failure to render the word πόλις in the accusative case, as the hypothetical context demands. This solution, however, does not really improve either the meaning of the phrase or the geography.

[168] See M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli, and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York, 1903), 1416, s.v. קרט.

[169] This reading is extremely difficult. Mann could find no place to identify with the Hebrew *śPYLŚ*. The ending letters, *PYLŚ*, could, with the transposition of the *yod* and the *lamed* (or, perhaps more feasibly, the reinterpretation of the *yod* as a *waw*) indicate the ending "polis." St Pile, or any number of variations, Pilla, Pilas are also possible, but none convinces.

[170] De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, chaps. 9–16. Greek Scholia on Pentateuch, T-S C 6.117 + Westminster College, Talmudica I.110; Scholia on Hexateuch, T-S C6.133 (part); Hebrew-Greek Mishnaic Glossary, T-S K 7.16; Biblical Commentaries, T-S C 6.133 (part) + Bodleian MS Heb. d. 43 fols. 25–6; Translation of Ecclesiastes, T-S Misc. 28.74. A survey of Hebrew MSS by Malachi Beit-Arié establishes an entire set of Byzantine MSS, mostly determined as such based on paleographical analysis; see above, chap. 2, n. 144.

[the book] having been translated into Arabic by the time he copied it there. Then, R. Nathaniel b. Meshullam converted it into Hebrew in the city of Mainz.[171]

If indeed referring to "Bari," as some have surmised, this pithy – if slightly convoluted – colophon embodies some of the characteristic traits of the Byzantine-Jewish economy: its geographic breadth, its cultural heterogeneity and, of course, traffic in written materials.

Byzantine Karaites also engaged in the broadly conceived category of religious literature, especially in the beginning in the eleventh century, as part of their ongoing project of translation of the Palestinian Karaite classics from Arabic to Hebrew. This program, under the aegis of its great exponent, Tobias b. Moses, naturally generated a demand for such books, the economic investment in which also points indirectly to a flourishing academic life.[172] In addition to the obvious ideological implications of this and similar undertakings, the Karaite program, perhaps more eloquently than any isolated example, implies both the value and the omnipresence of the scribal profession in the economy of the Jews. In Asia Minor, further from the major centers of Jewish life, the simple necessity of Hebrew manuscripts created a demand which even the smallest community had to meet. A colophon memorializes the Karaite scribe who copied the *Adat devorim* of Joseph the Constantinopolitan in 1207, which, the scrivener avers, "was completed by me; I am Judah b. Jacob … here in the city of GGRA."[173] The identity of the city to which the Bible was dedicated has

[171] Mann, *Jews*, I, 73–4, n. 2, following N. Porgès, "Note sur l'ouvrage Horayat Ha-Kore," *REJ* 23 (1891): 308–11, who comes up with the innovative reading of "Bari," based on the lack of sense for other readings and the well-attested connections between Germany and Italy by the thirteenth century. NB: Goitein's correction in the 1970 reprint of Mann, *Jews*, xxvii. Gil, *History of Palestine*, 548, n. 49 (= Gil, *The Land of Israel*, I, 451), thinks לבאר should be read as the *pi'el* infinitive meaning "to elucidate," and offers the call number of the manuscript, MS Bodl. Opp. 625. Mann reads it as "to Bari," claiming a missing final *yod*. Both are possible. If indeed "Bari," this text then also bears on the continuing relationship between Byzantine Judaism and Palestine; cf. Neubauer, "The Early Settlement," 613. Mann and Gil agree on one point: the phrase "having been translated into Arabic" ought to be construed as the book's having been *composed* in Arabic, which is a very loose conceptualization of the Hebrew מתורגם, implying a translation of thought into the written word, or the broader concept of interpretation, construal.

[172] Ankori, "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses," and Ankori, *Karaites*, 443–4; P. F. Frankl, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Karäer*, in Bericht über die Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums in Berlin 10 (Berlin, 1887), vol. V, 10–13.

[173] Starr, *JBE*, 240–1; Mann, *Texts*, II, 291; Ankori, *Karaites*, 125; Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 217–18. Cf. G. Khan, *The Early Karaite Tradition of Hebrew Grammatical Thought* (Leiden, 2000), 9. Khan points out the new edition of a Karaite Hebrew grammar entitled, *Me'or Ayin*, ed. M. N. Zishlin (Moscow, 1990), in which the colophon refers to *Gaggra* in the year 1208. Following Ankori's argumentation, one might consider reading גגרא as the city Gangra, reflecting the double *gamma* of the spelling of the town's name in Greek, Γάγγρα, as opposed to representing the current pronunciation with a נג/ע. Translation and notes in Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 217–18.

provided fodder for speculation; the most convincing hypothesis maintains that it refers to the city of Gangra, i.e., Germanicopolis, in north-central Asia Minor.

Sundry references to books pepper the eleventh- and twelfth-century Genizah correspondence. The aforementioned anonymous Jew in twelfth-century Seleucia, writing to his family in Egypt, betrays his anxiety over books. As part of the influx of Jews into the empire which began in the eleventh century, the author of this letter expected his family to come to Seleucia from Egypt; part of his letter includes a request that they bring books with them to his new home.[174] In addition, he explains how he requested books from "leaders" of the Byzantine military campaigns in the East, since he expected them to come home with spoils of victory. The curious reference to those leaders begs the question of the relationship between the Jewish correspondent and Byzantine authorities. One possible interpretation does not require intimacy or even acquaintance between them, but imagines military leaders as the distributors and liquidators of booty. Such profiteers would quickly learn that Hebrew manuscripts frequently fetch worthwhile prices among Jewish communities and individuals. In more direct fashion, Samuel ha-Bavli, living in Egypt, writes of his need to travel to Fustat in order to stock up on books, before emigrating to Salonica. As becomes clear, in other correspondence, he was a bookseller by trade.[175] To be sure, Samuel's search necessarily implies that Egypt produced more Hebrew copies than did Byzantium. But his letter also implies that Byzantium's thriving market corresponded to a healthy demand for new scholarly works, such as *Hovot ha-levavot*, written just recently by Bahya ibn Paqudah and specifically requested by Samuel in his first letter.[176] Finally, in another letter, in all probability also from Salonica, a certain Elijah writes to his brother in Fustat. In the course of the letter, he mentions a copy of the Scroll of Esther which the latter had sent him, and in return for which Elijah had sent a collection of his poetry.[177] Elijah is nervous about the arrival of his poetry and asks for an update no less than four times.[178] Naturally, these poems are imbued with special value, as the loving composition of the author, and it comes as no surprise that he "would be greatly saddened if they have not arrived."[179] Still, this personal example illustrates

[174] Goitein, "A Letter of Historial Importance," 533, l. 2.
[175] T-S Ar 53, fol. 37 in Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 30f., and above, chap. 2, n. 154; "Saloniki and Thebes," 24, 29, T-S 16.301.
[176] Ibid., 23ff.; Goitein, *Jewish Education*, 184–5, no. 17.
[177] T-S 20.45, Mann, *Texts*, I, 48–51; cf. above, n. 64, for date and location.
[178] Ibid., ll. 20–1, 30–1, 51–2, 74–5. [179] Ibid., l. 31.

not only the fecundity of Byzantine literary production but also the living market in written materials that crossed the sea.[180]

Since the high price of written material limited the scope of potential clients for scribes, it comes as no surprise that one of the few known patrons of Byzantine scribes, aside from communal institutions, happened to be the single most powerful Jew in the history of Spain.[181] In the middle of the tenth century, Hasdai ibn Shaprut served as the de facto vizier of the Caliph Abd 'al-Raman III, and he sponsored the leading Hebrew philologist-poets of his day.[182] This Jewish major-domo also collected manuscripts, and among his numerous dealings with the Byzantine world over the course of his illustrious career, Hasdai commissioned the copying of an immensely popular chronicle known as the *Sefer Yosippon*. To obtain the work, he sent an emissary to undertake the mission of transcription in Byzantine Italy, where the *Yosippon* was, in all probability, composed.[183] A Genizah manuscript preserves the story of Hasdai's emissary in Italy and his misadventures; Samuel, charged with the duty of bringing back a copy of the *Sefer Yosippon* to Hasdai, suffered a violent attack. Twelve miles from Naples, "brigands intercepted him and took from him the book and all the letters and whatever (else) they found in his possession," though in the end, the manuscript was recovered.[184] The episode reveals two key points. First of all, Italy was a center for Hebrew literary creativity, in no small part thanks to the fact that the Jews of Italy developed an increasingly Hebraic tradition as early as the ninth century, if not earlier.[185] Secondly, their Hebrew manuscripts commanded a market throughout the Mediterranean.[186]

The *Sefer Yosippon*, an anonymous composition, probably took its final form in Italy, in approximately the mid tenth century, that is, around the same time that Hasdai ordered the copy.[187] Its popularity is attested by the number of medieval manuscripts and subsequent printings, in addition

[180] See above, n. 171; for another example of copying and export to Russia, see Starr, *JBE*, 241,

[181] The other donor was David b. Nathan.

[182] J. Schirmann, *Ha-shirah ha-'ivrit bi-Sefarad uvi-Provenṣ*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1954–6), vol. I, 35–40.

[183] Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 86–90; Starr, *JBE*, 153; Mann, *Texts*, I, 23–7; U. Cassuto, "Una lettera ebraica del secolo X," *Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana* 29 (1918–20): 97–110.

[184] Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 89; the reference may be to traffic between Amalfi and Naples, see below, p. 228, n. 3.

[185] Based on the epigraphic evidence, in Ascoli, *Iscrizioni*, 16.

[186] Cf. above, n. 171.

[187] Flusser, *The Jossipon*; Flusser defends the date with internal and external evidence, 13–16; see also Flusser's discussion of the date in his introduction to his edition of *The Josippon*, II, 79–84.

to its mention among medieval scholars and scribes.[188] The fact that other sources, such as the aforementioned *Chronicle of Ahima'az* and *Sefer hakhmoni* of Shabbetai Donnolo also hail from Byzantine southern Italy emphasizes the literary and scribal importance of the region. But there is more: a tragic but telling reference to the role of Italy as a center for manuscripts comes from another anecdote in the same letter. The authors of the correspondence recorded brutal attacks against the Jewish communities in southern Italy (perhaps associated with the persecution of Romanus Lecapenus), and as a sidebar, they thankfully note that "not any Jewish writings were burned."[189]

In piecing together these various attestations of books and scribes among the Jews in Byzantine territory, a rather prominent sector of the economy comes into focus. Ironically, this node of the economy risks going almost unperceived, precisely due to its ubiquity and due to the fact that, in both the Karaite and Rabbanite spheres, the intellectual and spiritual concerns about books overshadowed the actual mechanics of copying, sales, commissions and the like. At the same time, this overlap provides the background from which we can extract information about books as a critical commodity, a staple, in the construction and maintenance of Jewish communities. Consequently, Byzantine scribal products, including extracanonical literature, rabbinic works, contracts and Scriptural texts, mirror the breadth of Byzantine-Jewish interests and their geographical reach. They also embody the exclusive aspect of the Jewish economy, in their language and usage.

KOSHER EDIBLES

The necessity of kosher (subst. *kashrut*) food in the life of a Jewish community needs no explanation, and its procurement, like the employment of scribes, is emblematic of the concept of a Jewish economy.[190] Food, simply by virtue of being constantly consumed and renewed, necessarily accounts for a significant part of the economy, while kosher food, consumed almost exclusively by Jews, defines this aspect of the economy as Jewish in

[188] Flusser, *The Jossipon*, II, 4–9; the chronicle was copied by no less a sage than R. Gershom "Light of the Exile" around the turn of the eleventh century. The work was known in Ethiopic, see *Josippon: Geschichte der Juden*, ed. M. Kamil (New York, 1937), and Arabic, see S. Sela, *The Sefer Yosifon and Parallel Sources in Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic* (Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 1991).

[189] Mann, *Texts*, I, 24, ll. 10–11.

[190] For reference to food that is kosher for Passover consumption see Starr, *JBE*, 176, citing a Christian explanation of the Passover service in V. N. Beneshevich, "On the History of the Jews in Byzantium, 6th–10th Centuries," (Russ.) *Evreiskaya Mysl* 2 (1926): 308–18.

character.[191] However, the ubiquity of food, even more than that of written materials, renders it virtually invisible in the sources, a fact that hinders a solid economic analysis of the subject and relegates most conclusions to the realm of conjecture and common sense.

It is apparently this dearth of direct evidence that led Zvi Ankori to describe the issues of kosher butchering by analogy to Palestine. According to Ankori, Byzantine supervision of kosher butchering

> had become in time a considerable source of power to the [Jewish] governing institutions of the community. This was so … because of the wide range of autonomous functions assumed by the Jewish community within the medieval corporate system. Such prerogatives as allocation of shops in the market, where food, prices and weight were supervised by communal officials, establishment of public abattoirs in larger communities and the supervision of individual *shohetim* [butchers] in smaller localities, etc. turned the preparation of ritually acceptable meat into a communal monopoly.[192]

Precisely due to this autonomous function, the Jews' religious standards applied to food production. Since those standards of *kashrut* differed between the Karaites and Rabbanites, Ankori maintains that communal control of kosher butchering must have engendered conflict.[193] In fact,

[191] The threat of Judaizing heresies constantly haunted the Byzantine authorities throughout the history of the empire, culminating in the iconoclastic crisis. At least one sect clung to much of Jewish practice, and almost certainly to kosher food. The Athinganoi lived in central Asia Minor, in a city called Amorion. There, the Athinganoi "observed Mosaic Law with the exception of circumcision … Every initiate procured for himself as teacher and guide a Hebrew man or woman … and entrusted to him or her the control of his household affairs." Starr, *JBE*, 98–9, quoting from *Scriptores post Theophanem*, col. 56. See also J. Starr, "An Eastern Christian Sect: the Athinganoi," *Harvard Theological Review* 29 (1936): 93–107. An example of the consumption of kosher food survives in remains of a shipwreck, in which a passenger's kosher casserole was found, see F. van Doorninck, Jr., "Byzantine Shipwrecks," *EHB*, 900.

[192] Ankori, *Karaites*, 286–7, n. 99, citing an argument regarding Palestinian Karaites in Baron, *History*, V, 249, 405, n. 49.

[193] Ankori, *Karaites*, 286, n. 99: "The sectaries argued that certain animals, such as those pregnant, were prohibited; they, accordingly, hesitated to patronize Rabbanite butchers, lest prohibited meat be sold to them by the latter along with that which was ritually unobjectionable. At the same time, they dispensed with the *bediḳah* [inspection] altogether, thus leaving all the meat handled by Karaite butchers open to Rabbanite suspicion." On food and butchering, see Sahl b. Maṣliaḥ's heated polemic in Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 116–17.

Sahl b. Masliah, a tenth-century Jerusalemite Karaite, wrote searing polemics against the Rabbanites, and in particular, a propagandistic letter of "outstanding importance," according to Nemoy, 110. Nemoy describes Sahl's rejoinder to Jacob b. Samuel as "the earliest complete example, so far discovered, of practical Karaite propaganda … It is reasonable to assume that many such harangues were delivered by itinerant Karaite missionaries all over the Near East." Certainly the choice of Hebrew for these polemics supports this assertion, especially with respect to the Byzantines, for whom Hebrew served as the common language between them and their Palestinian brethren. See Poznański, *Karaite Literary Opponents*, 30–41, and S. Pinsker, *Liqute Qadmoniyot* (Vienna, 1860), 25ff.

however, one cannot generalize about the role of kosher butchering in the communal affairs of the Karaites and Rabbanites. In the capital where the two sects lived in physical, though proximate, segregation, one can imagine separate butchers and standards. In smaller towns, where small numbers translated into mutual dependence, butchering, like calendar disputes, may indeed have caused direct conflict. But the two sects were able to come to livable solutions in any number of challenging circumstances, and there is no reason to believe that kosher butchering, important though it be, necessarily caused friction. More definitively, religious sensibilities about food contributed to the functional autonomy of the various communities – even if those sensibilities varied among the Jews themselves.

Though butchering holds a privileged place within the economy of food, wine even more emblematically signaled the particularity of the Jewish diet. Like meat, wine is subject to uniquely Jewish strictures. But unlike meat, wine's omnipresence as a staple beverage heightened the differences in its functions in both Christian and Jewish ritual, not to mention its ban in Islam.[194] More than any other edible, blessing and drinking wine classically instantiates the Jewish understanding of sanctity. And significantly, this sense of holiness largely hinges on the differentiation of Judaism from other religions – especially from Christian communion, which medieval Jews viewed as a pagan libation.[195] Thus, the determination of the *kashrut* of wine included consideration of the wine's contact (even passing or indirect) with non-Jews. In the juxtaposition of wine's ubiquity and Jewish legal controls on it, this determination necessarily impinged on commercial and social relations.

Without delving into the legal concerns surrounding wine, Byzantine-Jewish sources do discuss the business of wine. On the eve of the Islamic era, if an example from sixth-century Egypt is at all indicative, the business of selling kosher wine was not confined to the Jews as it would be in later periods in Europe. There, more than one apparently non-Jewish vintner sold and guaranteed the quality of wine to Jewish customers.[196] In the

For the southern Italian town of Salerno, where the Jews were, among other professions, butchers, see N. Tamassia, "Stranieri ed Ebrei nell'Italia meridionale dall'età romana alla sveva," *Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* 63/2 (Venice, 1904), 825ff. apud Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio," 423, n. 77.

[194] On the ubiquity of vineyards, J. Lefort and J.-M. Martin, "L'organisation de l'espace rural: Macédoine et l'Italie du sud (Xe–XIIIe siècle)," in *Hommes et richesses dans l'empire byzantin*, vol. II, ed. V. Kravari *et al.* (Paris, 1986), 18. For price, see J.-C. Cheynet *et al.*, "Prix et salaires à Byzance (Xe–XVe siècle)," in *Hommes et richesses*, II, 347–8.

[195] Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, 34.

[196] *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, ed. V. Tcherikover, A. Fuks and M. Stern (Jerusalem, 1964), III, 88, no. 500; III, 95–8, no. 508; 101–2, no. 512.

sketchiness of the record, silence reigns until the eleventh century, when the norms of wine segregation are not clear, but wine itself reappears. The Jewish doctor of Seleucia boasts of owning 400 barrels, clearly treating it as a valuable commodity.[197] The number 400 may either be troped and exaggerated, or it may indicate the production and accrual of wine for eventual sale – a distinct possibility, as straightforward testimony from eleventh-century Taranto proves.[198] Two bills of sale from that town explain that Leo sold to "Theophylaktos, also called Chimaria [Shemariah], a Hebrew by race, a plot of 2 vineyards."[199] In roughly the same region, the patriarch of the first generation of the Ahimaʿaz family, Amittai, engaged in wine making.[200] Beyond these brief notices, one can merely aver with confidence that the prominence of wine in Jewish life necessarily belies the paucity of the sources.

Naturally, Jews engaged in the preparation of many other types of foods as well, presumably – although not necessarily – marketing them primarily to fellow Jews. Jewish seals from the early and middle Byzantine periods may reflect adherence to standards of *kashrut*, with the seals serving as proof that the food had not been tampered with and that it preserved its edible status.[201] The export of wine and cheese from Byzantium extended to the Genizah community in Fustat, even though the Egyptians also produced their own such products.[202] And Sicily turns out to have been an important

[197] See above, chap. 2, n. 149.

[198] T-S 13 J 21, lines 34ff. S. D. Goitein, the original editor of the letter containing this reference, considered both options viable: Goitein, "A Letter of Historial Importance," 532 and commentary, and n. 13 of introduction, for the trope. In his later translation into English, "A Letter from Seleucia," 300, n. 24, Goitein revisits the issue, "as we know from other Geniza documents, viniculture and the production of wine were pursued as a sideline by respectable people – perhaps because wine was also used for religious purposes." Whether or not the Jews of Byzantium required wine produced exclusively by Jews must remain an open question.

[199] Starr, *JBE*, 194, citing F. Trinchera, *Syllabus Graecarum Membranarum* (Naples, 1865), 29–31, 36–8. See also Colafemmina, "Insediamenti," 201.

[200] Starr, *JBE*, 142, citing Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 86f. For a later period, see Jacoby, "Venice and the Venetian Jews," 45.

[201] D. M. Friedenberg, "The Evolution and Uses of Jewish Byzantine Stamp Seals," *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 52–3 (1994–5): p. 12, no. 7; p. 13, no. 9; p. 15, no. 17; passim.

[202] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 46, 76. On p. 402, n. 33, Goitein cites: Jewish National and Univ. Lib. MS 4° 577.3, f. 7v, l. 12; see also T-S 24.78, margin and verso, l. 4, edited by Goitein in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. G. Makdisi (Leiden, 1965), 270–84. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 46: "But there was also a very lively export of Byzantine and western European goods to the Muslim area. This export, however, with few exceptions, such as cheese, was not handled by Jews. Therefore, we find records of it mostly in Geniza documents other than business letters, for example, in marriage settlements, which register the clothing, bedding, and furniture brought in by the bride as part of her marriage portion. Thus a Jewish bride in the Muslim East could not do without a Rum kerchief …" See also D. Jacoby, "Byzantine Crete in the Navigation and Trade Networks of Venice and Genoa," in *Oriente e occidente tra medioevo ed età moderna: studi in onore di Geo Pistarino*, ed. L. Balletto (Acqui Terme, 1997), 521–3, 527–8.

source of cheese in the twelfth century, after the island fell to the Muslims. Perhaps the association of Sicilian Jews with this trade began in the Byzantine period on the island, but the record is silent.[203] All of these markets would have required some system for establishing the *kashrut* of the food, to which the seals may speak. Meanwhile, without reference to *kashrut*, one small scrap of evidence offers a glimpse into the market life of the Jews in Byzantium: the aforementioned letter from Seleucia mentions a Baghdadi baker of pancakes in Constantinople.[204]

The possibility of some Jewish production notwithstanding, the mere fact that agriculture was the motor of the Byzantine economy indicates that non-Jews must have played a predominant part in the chain of kosher food preparation.[205] This participation may have been limited, depending on the needs and ritual-legal standards of the Jewish communities, but the Jews inevitably relied on staples, such as grains and oil, from the general market.[206] By the very nature of food consumption and the requirements of Jewish law, therefore, the economic aspect of food also wove the inner Jewish economy into that of society at large, with the possible exception of meat and wine.[207] Unfortunately however, quantification – and even proper qualification – of that interrelatedness eludes us today, and all that remains is a vague sense of the role of kosher food in the inner economy of the Jews.

PILGRIMAGE

The Holy Land attracted Jews, Christians and Muslims throughout the Middle Ages, and the sources do not fail to include some examples of

[203] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 380, n. 51, citing T-S 20.80, about a shipment of cheese from that island.

[204] Goitein, "A Letter of Historial Importance," 533 and commentary. Goitein calls the זלאביה a "cake made from honey and almonds."

[205] J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Cambridge, 1990), chap. 4. For the urban economy, see Ch. Macri, *L'organisation de l'économie urbaine dans Byzance* (Paris, 1925), who deals with the economy represented in the *BE.* See also the collection of articles by R. S. Lopez, in *Byzantium and the World around It* (London, 1978). In Roman and early-Byzantine Palestine, the role of Jewish agriculture seems to have been more prominent; see Y. Hirschfeld, "Farms and Villages in Byzantine Palestine", *DOP* 51 (1997): 33–71.

[206] For an exposition of grains in Byzantium, see J. L. Teall, "The Grain Supply of the Byzantine Empire," *DOP* 13 (1959), 87–140. Teall, p. 96, explains just how heavily the urban economy depended on this grain supply, giving the lie to any argument which artificially separates agriculture from urban economies. J. Koder, "Maritime Trade and the Food Supply for Constantinople in the Middle Ages," in *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birminghan, April 2000*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot, 2002), 119.

[207] Agus, *Urban Civilization*, index, s.v. "wine" for responsa on the topic of wine in France and Germany in the same period. See also the analogous passages dealing with wine in Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I.

Byzantine Jews who undertook the trip.[208] From the economic perspective, these pilgrimages naturally affected Palestinian society much more than they did the Byzantine, except insofar as Byzantine Jewish communities resided in towns that depended on pilgrimage in general, either Christian or Jewish.[209] Not surprisingly, however, the choice to take up the traveler's staff entailed a series of economic costs and opportunities that do reflect Byzantine interests. As common as travel was and as extensive as were the economic ties between Byzantium and the rest of the Mediterranean, pilgrimage did not in and of itself offer the pilgrim the opportunity to profit. On the contrary, the cost was augmented by the pious donations that pilgrims routinely carried with them to Palestine.[210] Still, travelers might take advantage of a business trip to visit the holy sites of Judaism, or conversely, they might try to parlay a pilgrimage into a business opportunity, as at least one case implies.[211] In any case, Jews of all types clearly found the means to travel to the land of their forefathers, as one Persian traveler reported in the year 1047: "From all the countries of the Greeks, too, and from other lands, the Christians and the Jews come up to Jerusalem in great numbers in order to visit the church and synagogue that are there."[212] Other travelers, whose purpose remains indeterminate, presumably pursued multiple ends, both pious and practical, such as Mar Eliyah, a "perfect and dedicated student and merchant," or R. Ravyah, R. Simeon and R. Isaac, "men from al-Rum," of whom the last chose to remain in Jerusalem.[213]

[208] For a brief summary of the evidence, see Starr, *JBE*, 73; J. Prawer, *The History of the Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1988), 136, gives an apt explanation for the ongoing interest. For Byzantine Orthodox pilgrims, see A. Külzer, "Byzantine and Early Post-Byzantine Pilgrimage to the Holy Land and to Mount Sinai," in *Travel in the Byzantine World*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot, 2002), 149–61.

[209] W. E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton, 1968), 250–1; M. Avi-Yonah, "The Economics of Byzantine Palestine," *Israel Exploration Journal* 8 (1958): 39–51. The town of Chonai clearly enjoyed the benefits of this traffic, and Jews lived there at least until expelled by its bishop, Niketas; see Magdalino, *Manuel I*, 131.

[210] Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 65 (Eng.), 4 (Heb.). See also Gil, *The Land of Israel*, I, 509 (= Gil, *A History of Palestine*, 622–3, no. 828).

[211] See below, n. 215.

[212] Nasir-i-Khusrau, *Diary*, 23, quoted by Starr, *JBE*, 197; S. D. Goitein, "Contemporary Letters on the Capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders," *JJS* 3 (1952): 162ff.; Ankori, *Karaites*, 186, nn. 67–8, explains that "travel and population movements were discouraged … for administrative and fiscal reasons … However, pilgrimage to the land of the Bible and journeys for the purpose of study were regarded by government and public opinion alike as meritorious deeds of devotion." Ankori cites S. Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization* (London, 1933), 205; Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, 1951), I, 38. Nevertheless, I see no reason why one should assume that the Christians who followed this policy imputed any piety whatsoever to the Jews. See also, Grossman, "Communication," 120.

[213] Gil, *The Land of Israel*, III, 160–4, ULC Or 1080 J 78, verso, ll. 19–20 and margins, with reference in his *History of Palestine*, 616–17. Mar Eliyah in E. N. Adler, "Un document des Juifs en Italie," *REJ* 68 (1914): 42, l. 8.

Making the most of their differing circumstances, two men, one a Byzantine Jew in Egypt and the other a Russian Jew in Greece, augmented their respective journeys with a pilgrimage. In a letter to Ephraim b. Shemariah, Yeshuaʿ ha-Kohen requests a letter of recommendation on behalf of a Byzantine captive in Alexandria. The recently redeemed captive, named Shabbetai b. Nethaniel from Attaleia, wanted to realize the dream of visiting Jerusalem before he was to travel back to his home. In addition to guaranteeing his redemption, the Alexandrine community "fulfilled his wish, according to which he sought to [visit Jerusalem … to pray] at the Holy Mount, the location of the resting-place of His glory."[214] In roughly the same period, an unnamed visitor to Salonica "from the community of Russia (*rusiy'ah*)," probably on a business trip, met up with his relative who, having just visited the Holy Land, extolled its virtues. When he heard of the glory of the Land of Israel, the Russian's "spirit impelled him also to go and bow down at the site of the Sanctuary."[215]

Tangential to the question of pilgrimage, personal concerns and outright emigration always led some percentage of the Jewish population to Palestine. The Karaites, for their part, traveled from Byzantium to Palestine often. Their travel purposes, other than those of commerce, were clearly rooted in the large-scale project of transferring the knowledge of the Palestinian Karaite centers to Byzantium.[216] In addition, the exalted position of the Land of Israel led to a generalized pilgrimage/immigration tradition among Karaites, although no sources document the specific travels of any individual from Byzantium, with the notable exception of the leader Tobias b. Moses.[217] In a similar vein, upon release from a Byzantine prison, Nahrai b. Nissim, an eminent Tunisian-Egyptian merchant, vowed to settle in the Holy Land.[218] Pilgrimage, holy sites and saint veneration even inspired ideological attacks from those committed to full-blown settlement in the Land of Israel, such as the Karaite scholar and polemicist Sahl b. Masliah.[219] In general, the role of the Land of Israel as the hub of the Jewish people resulted in both pious travel,

[214] T-S 24.11, recto, ll. 15ff.: Mann, *Jews*, I, 92; II, 91; partial trans. Starr, *JBE*, 191.

[215] Bodl. 2826.26, fols. 70–4 in Mann, *Jews*, II, 192; translated by Starr, *JBE*, 171. By *Rusiyah*, a person hailing from Kievan Russia is evidently meant.

[216] M. Gil believes that the scholars remained in Palestine, *The Land of Israel*, 508. On the project of translation undertaken there, see pp. 655–6. For the continued Karaite immigration to Palestine into the eleventh century, see Gil, *The Land of Israel*, sec. 827.

[217] See above, chap. 2, nn. 141–2. For the early Karaite call to return to the Holy Land, see J. Mann, "A Tract by an Early Karaite Settler in Jerusalem," *JQR*, NS 12 (1921–2): 283f.; trans. in Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 35f., who attributes this passage to Daniel al-Qumisi.

[218] J. Starr, "On Nahrai b. Nissim of Fustat," *Zion* 1 (1936): 443.

[219] J. Shatzmiller, "Jews, Pilgrimage, and the Christian Cult of Saints," in *After Rome's Fall*, ed. A. Murry (Toronto, 1998), 339, citing J. Prawer, *History of the Jews of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 172.

trade and exchange, often at one and the same time. The overall impression given by the sources is one of mixed opportunities for pious and economic interests.

A JEWISH ECONOMY

The notion of Judaism as a religion does not do justice to the complex of nationality, legal culture, language and territorial consciousness that made up Jewish identity. Religious sensibilities permeate these other components of Jewish life and identity, even when they seem otherwise unrelated to God or the spirit. Consequently, Jewish economic history, while certainly suffering shortcomings in the exposition of spiritual or intellectual culture, nonetheless assumes that the exchange of human and material resources can reflect the living, day-to-day terms of this highly variegated – and more accurate – concept of Jewishness. Jewish communal contributions translate into ritual and legal orientation, which in turn govern business dealings and the dispensation of intra-communal justice. In other words, the economic analytical perspective helps to achieve a more complete understanding of Judaism on its own terms.

At the level of basic societal requirements, the Jewish communities of Byzantium, like other communities around the world, sought to set their own agenda. They vigorously exercised their communal powers and thereby generated an institutional force that effectively guaranteed their rights of self-governance. The propagation of the family, alimentary standards, education, jurisprudence, and of course religion, all fell to their own ancient and complex system of law and ritual. And if this aspect of Jewish society, with its internal exchanges, somewhat closed itself off from the Byzantine world around it, it was entirely integrated into the larger Jewish world that, in analogous fashion, set up its own borders, with its own geographical, political, economic and religious subdivisions.

From the point of view of Jewish history, then, the inward-looking aspect of the economy of the Byzantine Jews helps to place them in the context of that Jewish universe, most notably, with their coreligionists in Egypt, Palestine, Italy and Mesopotamia, though also with Spain and Eastern Europe. While, to be sure, the salient characteristics of this relationship were not monetary, but literary, religious and scholarly, the reduction of these efforts to some kind of exchangeable commodity helps to trace their direction and to measure, if at all possible, their relative investment. Thus, the exchange of books preoccupies correspondents primarily for their content, but an appreciation of their value as objects legitimately enhances the

notion of their overall worth and more fully accounts for the risks, advantages and purposes in their exchange.[220] At the same time, the inner economy exhibited a genuinely, or more easily recognizably, economic function as well; donations and the redemption of captives, though intended for exclusively Jewish benefit, were nonetheless pinned to the open market in terms of currency and rates. In this sense, though mostly cordoned off and relatively small within the Byzantine context, the inner Jewish economy belonged to a much larger one that spanned countries, seas and languages.

In somewhat more complicated fashion, this aspect of their economy that closed ranks to the outside world serves as a point of departure for understanding the limits of the Jews' interaction with society at large, even if those limits are not entirely clean-cut or monolithic. The de facto autonomy that the Jews enjoyed, and perhaps most importantly its longevity, prove that this relationship, even if relatively hands-off, still required the active participation of two parties: the Jewish community (collectively understood) and the Byzantine state. To put a fine point on it, even though the Jews relied on precedent and the exercise of their own strengths to maintain this laissez-faire relationship, they still relied on the Byzantine government's acquiescence. Internal though it be, this economy and the social infrastructure that it supported did not exist in a vacuum, and one cannot help but wonder about the significance of those moments when the imperial powers changed the terms of that relationship. The intermittent persecutions of the Middle Byzantine period clearly challenged Jewish economic and juridical autonomy, but to all appearances, they did not fundamentally change the terms of the relationship. The descriptions of these persecutions lead to the conclusion that, at their root, with the exception of Heraclius' attack, they did not spring from tension between the Jewish community and the bureaucracy of the Byzantine Empire, or from immediate economic expediency, such as motivated some expulsions of late medieval Western Europe. Rather, the zealous violence originated in the ideological tension inherent between Christianity and Judaism, with the catalysts for these events remaining obscure (again excepting Heraclius' persecution). If the structural problem of the anti-Jewish sentiment seems to bode ill for social and economic stability, the infrequency of the actual persecutions tells a different story. Ultimately, the overall continuity of Jewish institutions, their apparent recovery from persecutions and the general (if imperfect)

[220] Cohen, *Book of Tradition*, 159, addresses the literary transmission between Byzantium and Spain in the twelfth century.

impression of successful coexistence over the centuries bespeaks a firm communal infrastructure with deep roots in society.

The significance, then, of the inner economy of the Jews lies in its capacity to put Jewish life in the context of the world around it, with special attention to the details of daily existence. The very exclusivity that characterizes this level of the economy limits their responsibility to the sovereign Byzantine government under which they lived. This autonomy – in both its extent and its limits – also reflects a continuation of an important aspect of the Roman spirit of governance, which allowed for a substantial measure of freedom in exchange for reliable fulfillment of civic duties. At the same time, the breadth and vitality of this inward-looking economy leads to the conclusion that, at least on this level, the Byzantine Jews defined themselves in relation to their coreligionists in other countries, more than they did as subjects of the imperial state. It is no accident, then, that the economic manifestation of their role as Byzantine subjects relied on this primary, inner economy for its infrastructure as a launching-off point into the highly competitive markets outside the Jewish world. Through the complex of their internal economy, the Jews mustered the resources to engage with larger markets beyond their own, and they prepared to engage those markets more effectively because of their insularity. Thus, insofar as we grant that outward relationship historical import, then the inner economy merits consideration as the first step towards it.

CHAPTER 4

The integrated Jewish economy

The Jews of Byzantium engaged economically with society in a number of ways, but consistently over the centuries they committed the bulk of their resources to two realms: taxes and textiles. The first of these, taxation, poses significant problems of definition, because the uniformity of sources declines sharply between the early and middle periods. This lack of clear-cut and abundant evidence in the seventh and subsequent centuries has resulted in a longstanding dispute regarding taxation of the Jews. Scholars question if a special Jewish tax existed, or if the Jews were simply subject to the same burden of taxation as all others in the realm. A resolution to this decades-old debate deserves some attention, but the problem itself, posed thus, only tangentially serves the overarching task of analyzing economic relationships as reflective of civic and social ones. In different fashion, the mode of taxation, i.e., collective or individual, might more accurately suggest the standing of the Jews vis-à-vis the fisc, a posture that not only represents the official relationship to the government but also – indirectly and symbolically – the Jewish place in society. Even analyzed through this lens, however, the official nature of taxation cannot illustrate the day-to-day encounters among people and groups, as other aspects of the economy can do.

Unlike taxation, which recognizes first and foremost the subject–state relationship, Byzantine-Jewish manufacturing and commerce evolved in the context of a bustling marketplace, both in Byzantium and beyond. Jewish production and sale of textiles and hides throughout the region routinely brought Jews into contact with the larger non-Jewish world, and through this engagement they created a niche for themselves in society. By virtue of their notable and ancient presence in these commercial arenas, the Jews perceived themselves, and non-Jews also viewed them, as active members in the economic life of the empire, with an important role to play. This mining of economic history supplements the very few (in fact, insufficient) sources that explicitly discuss the extent and limits

of Jewish social integration among the non-Jewish population. We know, for instance, that the Jews' trade and manufacture of these essential products placed them squarely at the heart of the Byzantine urban economy. Admittedly, the Jews were not integrated into society in the way we understand the concept of integration today; they did not participate in the Constantinopolitan guilds during the majority of the Middle Byzantine period; they lived in a separate neighborhood; and longstanding law kept them from civil and military service. Nonetheless, general acknowledgment of their enduring commercial contribution indicates that Byzantine Jews belonged in the marketplace, where they negotiated and competed as crucial participants.

This integrated aspect of the Byzantine-Jewish economy speaks, therefore, to the Jewish involvement in Byzantine society, both as they saw that participation and as their non-Jewish landsmen did. In serving that function, this aspect of the economy calls into question common-sense assumptions about the relationship between worldly engagement and relgious–ethnic segregation, because the economic wherewithal to compete in and contribute to these markets originated in the infrastructure of the inner, or segregated, economy. Specifically, Byzantine-Jewish commerce relied on the far-reaching and particularly Jewish network of business and cultural relationships at home and abroad, transporting not only Hebrew books and pious donations but also commercial products, through the same avenues of communication and travel. At the same time, the truck in these goods all fell under Jewish law, which facilitated exchange. In other words, the Jews leveraged their communications and exchanges which, though limited to coreligionists and bound by internal religious mores, actually provided entrée into the larger regional market and society.

Thus, both taxation and textiles bridged the gap between the Jewish minority and the Byzantine majority culture and government, though both economies differed markedly in the manner in which each one reflected and encouraged interaction with the mainstream of society. Each relied on different mechanisms, purposes and underlying relationships. To all appearances, the government taxed the Jews individually (or, more precisely, by family) and locally, essentially treating them as subjects, without referring to their communal authorities. Though the Jewish community in fact functioned quite broadly as an autonomous unit, the Byzantine government preferred not to recognize any official status of communal representation, especially as regards taxation. There is only the slimmest evidence, moreover, that the Jews mobilized their communal organization, even unofficially, for the purpose of organizing their tax payments amongst

themselves. Meanwhile, the preeminent Jewish interests in textile production and trade took completely different shape. Here, the regional breadth of Jewish mercantile interests complemented vigorous localized, Jewish industry, and perforce brought the Jewish communication network to bear in a wider Byzantine context.

TAXATION, TAX COLLECTION AND FINES

Taxation naturally holds an important place in economic history, as the official, regular payment of the citizen or subject to the government. Accordingly, it largely defined the relationship between the Jews and the state over the centuries, though that relationship took a rather dramatic turn after the rise of Islam. During the period between the reigns of Constantine I and Justinian I, the Christianization of the Empire had brought with it a re-evaluation of the obligations owed the government by the Jews, with the latter gradually losing some key tax exemptions. Essentially, as the emperors struggled to define Judaism in a Christian state, ideological and practical concerns played themselves out in tax policy.[1] Various emperors vacillated in the short term, alternately heeding and disregarding Jewish lobbies, but after three centuries of Christian rule, the Jews found themselves in a distinctly unfavorable position as compared to that which they enjoyed in the beginning of the fourth century.[2] Religious rivalry, though explicitly part of this negotiation, cannot entirely account for the increased tax burden of the Jews in the Christian Empire; clearly, the simple need to raise revenue also prompted the revocation of Jewish privileges. The increased burden took two forms during the early Byzantine period: first, the remittance of the Jewish tax, the *aurum coronarium*, from the Jewish coffers of their own Patriarch to the imperial treasury; and second, the gradual yet unyielding pressure on the Jews to sit on the city councils and to take up the tax onus associated with that office.[3] Crucially for the early Byzantine period, the Jews enjoyed official representation as a national entity led by their Patriarch in Tiberias, and even after the effective abolition of the Patriarchate in 415,

[1] On the ideological overtones, see: *CTh* 16.8.1, *CJ* 1.9.3, Linder, *Imperial Legislation*, 125–7, 131, n. 16.

[2] For the third-century taxes on the Jews of the Roman Empire, see Avi-Yonah, *The Jews*, 93–102. For the question of citizenship and its associated rights and obligations, see Juster, *Juifs dan l'empire romain*, I, 233–42. Prior to 212 and the edict of Caracalla, see A. Rabello, "Jewish and Roman Jurisdiction," in *The Jews in the Roman Empire* (Aldershot, 2000), 142, 145.

[3] For the appropriation of the *aurum coronarium*, see *CTh* 16.8.29; for the ultimate word on the Jewish participation in the curia, see Justinian's Novel 45, in Rabello, *Giustiniano, Ebrei e Samaritani*, II, 802–5.

they continued to prosecute their interests as a body politic before the government for some time.[4]

Subsequent to the reign of Heraclius, the Jews' tax status becomes difficult to discern, apparently representing a final transition from the status of body politic to body religious, as the Jews lost not only the trappings but also the voice of their national representation.[5] That is, the Jewish tax status, no longer subject to the spirited lobby of the official organs of Jewish representation, stabilized under the unchallenged will of the emperor and the fisc. Thus, the sources from the period between the seventh and thirteenth centuries no longer recount the wrangling of well-defined interest groups. Only with some difficulty do the varied and sometimes problematic accounts coalesce into a picture of two distinct types of fiscal contribution. First, the Jews paid regular taxes; second, they were subject, on occasion, to fines for any number of reasons. The quantity and nature of these taxes and fines echo not only the raw, monetary terms of this financial contract between ruler and ruled, but, more significantly, they also betray at least two of the assumptions at root in that exchange: a basic, though rarely consequential, attitude of discrimination against the Jews; and a predictably decisive assertion of imperial sovereignty along fiscal lines, which logically also established the limits of Jewish communal autonomy.

The first question, namely, that of taxation, tends to center on the more specific problem of the Jewish tax, and it has attracted much attention because of its implications for religious discrimination. Faced with the ambiguity of the sources, scholars of the first half of the twentieth century propounded two opposing interpretations: Some argued that the Jews paid an additional, discriminatory tax, while others maintained that they bore no extra tax burden. In the end, the early disputants arrived at the common conclusion that the Byzantine government did exact discriminatory taxes from the Jews but that they did not impose those taxes with either great zeal

[4] *CTh* 16.8.22, subsequently, with the death of Gamaliel II, the office lapsed; J. E. Seaver, *Persecution of the Jews in the Roman Empire* (Lawrence, Kans., 1952), 70. In the period between Justinian I and Heraclius, one case is preserved which may attest to this collective quality of taxation. Tcherikover et al., *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, III, 93–4, n. 506, argue for understanding the payment of "Theon to Neilammon the head[man] of the Jews," as some kind of official payment in sixth-century Egypt. Tcherikover *et al.* discuss the problem of the translation "headman" from the fragmentary letters κεφ …, which may begin κεφαλητιῶνα, meaning poll-tax, or κεφαληώτη, meaning some kind of communal leader. Context favors the latter, but in any case, it may refer to the tax paid to that leader.

[5] In the Codes of Theodosius II and Justinian I, there is the nascent tendency to consider the Jews in terms analogous to those of heretics, that is, in essentially religious terms, even though the Jews had, since pagan rule of the empire, related to the government as a client or subject state or nation.

or exorbitant expectations.[6] Later scholarship has tended either to favor that consensus or to refrain from concluding either way.[7] Almost unconsciously, much of the twentieth-century debate has centered around the definition of the word "tax," since most scholars agree that the Jews paid some kind of fee, imposed specifically on them *qua* Jews. The question of the relative cost and permanence of this fee was widely understood to correlate to the special status of the Jews and, by extension, to the degree of discrimination imposed on them by the Byzantine government.[8] Problematically, this correlation also implied a comparison to the Jews' status either in Western Europe or under Islam.[9]

To Joshua Starr, the standard-bearer for the argument against the existence of such a tax, the absence of compelling, straightforward proof for specifically Jewish taxation implies a regular existence for the Jews of the empire, generally unencumbered by negative discrimination.[10] Still, some evidence of targeted taxation does exist, forcing Starr to account for those conspicuous cases. His argument buckles under the weight of the evidence that he must refute, and ultimately Starr himself comes around to the opinion that the Jews did pay some kind of special tax.[11] But he still believed that the Jews fared relatively well in the empire, so he attempts to divest the Jewish tax of its teeth, pointing out that even Franz Dölger, the primary exponent of the existence of a Jewish tax, "does not maintain that this [presumed Jewish] tax, unlike those collected from Jews elsewhere, was always designed to bring in revenue; it was upon occasion, if not regularly, a mere 'Rekognitionsgabe.'"[12] So, though he acknowledges the tax's existence, Starr is at pains to mitigate the degree of institutionalized discrimination connoted by the unqualified term "Jewish tax."

[6] For a review of this dispute, see: Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 41; Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 199, n. 1; and Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 77–92, with brief discussion in P. Alexander's review of *Jews in the Byzantine Empire 641–1204*, by Joshua Starr, *Byzantion* 17 (1944–5): 396–9.

[7] De Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks or Romans?," 109; Ankori, *Karaites*, 183; Dölger, "Die Frage der Judensteuer in Byzanz," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftgeschichte* 26 (1933), 11; Laiou, "Institutional Mechanisms," 179.

[8] Andréadès, "The Jews of the Byzantine Empire," 18; Starr, *JBE*, 11.

[9] E.g., Starr, *JBE*, 11.

[10] Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 67; regarding early references to a Jewish tax, Starr, *JBE*, 11, 93–4, offers the different versions of eighth-century sources. Among them, Zonaras alone refers to the Jews and the capitation tax (κεφαλητιῶνα) in the Byzantine context; Theophanes refers to the registration of the newborns, only insofar as such registration recalls the Pharaonic decree of Exodus; Kedrenos does not even mention the Jews. Starr rightly rightly points out the inconclusiveness of these sources, differing as they do, with respect to the Jewish capitation tax.

[11] Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 67–8; Sharf, "Heraclius and Mohamet," in *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium*, 76, n. 83; Andréadès, "Les Juifs et le fisc dans l'empire byzantin," 28–9; Andréadès, "The Jews of the Byzantine Empire," 17–20 (where he ultimately agrees with Dölger); Dölger, "Judensteuer," 11; Starr, *Romania*, 111, 116, n. 3; résumé in Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 83–6.

[12] Starr, *JBE*, 11.

Andrew Sharf recapitulates Starr's hedged position, which represents the scholarly consensus; he explains that the "evidence is therefore, on the whole in favor of a special tax on Jews, and in their last opinions on the question, both Andréadès and Starr came to agree with Professor Dölger that Byzantine Jewry had, in fact, been subject to such a tax."[13] The terms of the consensus find best summary in a 1934 article by Andreas Andréadès, who, though agreeing with Dölger's view in the end, echoes Starr's concerns and avers

> (a) That this tax was not always levied. (b) That it was not paid solely by Jews. The only writer who mentions it, and who curiously enough is not himself a Jew but an Arab, says that it was paid "by the Jews and the Pagans." (c) That according to the same Arab source, this tax did not exceed one gold piece for each adult man.[14]

In their agreement, such as it is, neither Sharf nor the others fully question what this tax might actually mean, beyond the reflexive assumption that a special tax correlates to discriminatory policies and attitudes. In order to soften that assumed correlation, Andréadès' representative position concedes the term "tax" but hardly rises to that level, insofar as the irregularity of its enforcement and its commensurately erratic appearance in the sources may reflect the whim of the emperors in applying it.[15]

In the final analysis, the assertion of a Jewish tax – even if a "Rekognitionsgabe" – ought indeed to signal the traditional modes of religious discrimination. But there is another side to the history, which is masked by the overemphasis on the exclusivity or amount of the Jewish tax. The indeterminacy of the perhps irregular and probably nominal Jewish tax may very well confirm the reigning impression about the Jews. That is, though religious and ethnic discrimination did find economic expression, the vagueness of the sources on the Jewish tax seems to indicate that religious rivalry did not dominate Jewish tax policy.[16] Their cultural identity as Greek speakers and their economic contributions blunted, and perhaps

[13] Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," 107; F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches* (Munich and Berlin, 1924; 2nd edn. 1994), vol. II, pt. 2, n. 892; Mann, "The Messianic Movements during the First Crusades," 253–9.

It is noteworthy that Ankori (p. 183), even as he weighs in on the debate, abstains from a conclusion, except to assert that "whatever the case, there is no doubt that the Karaites bore the same tax obligations as their Rabbanite compatriots." Even this statement, however, may not be precisely accurate. In the eleventh century a volatile Karaite–Rabbanite relationship devolved into accusations resulting in a fine imposed only against the Rabbanites. See also Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," 117; Starr, *JBE*, 17; Baron, *History*, III, 190ff., see n. 37. Mann, *Texts*, I, 49–50.

[14] Andréadès, "The Jews of the Byzantine Empire," 18. [15] Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 91.

[16] Laiou, "Institutional Mechanisms," 168.

superseded, whatever prejudice this special tax represented. More to the point, however, the method of tax collection among the Jews as individual payers is more telling of their status than is the thoroughly debated fact of a Jewish tax.

The concept of a Jewish tax implies collectivity, which in turn emphasizes the segregated, minority status, not only of the Jews but also of the Jewish community, as an *imperium in imperio*. In this scenario, the Jewish community governed not only Jewish affairs but also served as the intermediary between individual Jewish households and the government. By distributing the tax burden on its own terms and presenting the government with a lump sum, the Jewish community both rendered revenue and acknowledged subjugation to the Christian Empire. In Western Europe and the early Byzantine period, this model prevailed. Indeed, the precedent through the sixth century clearly established both discriminatory (sometimes vitriolically so) and collective taxation of Byzantine Jewry; moreover, imperial legislation linked the two.[17] But in the Middle Byzantine period, the explicitly discriminatory Jewish tax constituted an ever-decreasing portion of the Jewish tax contribution, as Starr and Andréadès point out (and perhaps as indicated by the inconsistency of the sources). Meanwhile, other evidence seems to suggest that the real substance of the Jews' tax payments followed the same model that applied to the other Byzantine subjects, not only in amount but also in form. Though not conclusive, the sources appear to indicate that the Jews paid a special tax, which decreased in practical significance but which expressed, fiscally, the institutionalized culture and policy of anti-Judaism. But the Jews also paid the bulk of their taxes individually, through the normal channels. In this capacity, the fisc did not recognize a Jewish community as such (though it sometimes dealt with that community as a fact). Rather, the Jews functioned seamlessly as subjects, without official reference to their minority status.

At the outset of the middle Byzantine period, the Jewish tax status is unknown. The seventh century witnessed a revolution in the Byzantine Empire, not only on a political level and not exclusively due to its massive defeat at the hands of the Arabs. Heraclius undertook a major revamping of the administration of the empire, canonizing, if not inventing, the theme system, whereby the entire Byzantine territory was divided into military

[17] *CTh* 16.8.29: "The leaders of the Jews … shall exact the yearly tribute from the synagogues at the order of all the *palatini*, just as they used to require the so-called *aurum coronarium* for the patriarch [in Tiberias]."

administrative units.[18] In this changed landscape with few sources regarding the Jews, the evolution of the Jewish tax status lacks a clear starting point. Any position relies on a relatively weak argument *ex silentio*. To wit, Andrew Sharf, who otherwise supports the notion of a Jewish tax, remarked on the dearth of the sources in this period, apparently concurring with Starr, that "there is not the slightest trace of any attempt to levy a special tax on that part of the population which was the least likely to make an effective protest."[19] In fact, however, neither the assumption of continuity nor the negative conclusions based on silence offer any reliable fodder for historical analysis. That the Jews paid taxes goes without saying, but in what capacity remains a complete mystery for the seventh century.

In the eighth century, a trace of fiscal policy from the early Byzantine period reappears, condemning the Jews to the hated city councils, or decurionate, even though the city councils had long since ceased to exist.[20] In his *Ecloga*, the iconoclastic Emperor Leo III stole a page from Justinian's *Corpus*: "A Jew cannot hold a post of honor, nor serve as a magistrate, nor do military service. But he shall be subject to the lot of the decurionate and the disabilities thereof."[21] Two explanations seem plausible for the reiteration of the obsolete clause regarding the decurionate. First, simple conservatism favored the preservation or copying of laws, even once obsolete. Second, insofar as the limitation of Jewish prerogatives translated into the assertion of imperial ones, the repetition of these anti-Jewish laws was simply prudent. It kept open a venue for political or fiscal action against the Jews that might behoove the emperor. Only in this indirect fashion might the law have had any effect on the Jews, especially in the *Ecloga*, a code otherwise concerned with the purging of outdated legislation.

More compellingly, Leo's iconoclastic program played itself out among Christians in ways that evoked the traditionally discriminatory, fiscal relationship to the Jews. The one reference to taxation indicates that the *kephaletion*,

[18] W. E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge, 1995), 279–85, argues that Heraclius' thematic organization (i.e., the militarization of the administration of the empire) was an *ad hoc* military/strategic response to the conflict with the Persians. Accordingly, the economic, administrative and agricultural consequences were secondary to the original military impulse.

[19] Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," 107–8.

[20] F. Dölger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1927), 74ff.; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 7.

[21] E. H. Freshfield, trans., *A Manual of Roman Law: the Ecloga* (Cambridge, 1926), 130–2, based on *Ecloga Leonis et Constantinii*, ed. A. Monferratus (Athens, 1889), 64–5. The relevant passages are in fact from the appendix, and do not occur in all the editions of the *Ecloga*, nor in the various medieval publications of the *Ecloga*, such as the revised version, *Ecloga Privata Aucta*. For the various forms which the *Ecloga* took, see the most recent work on the subject, L. Burgmann, *Ecloga* (Frankfurt, 1983), 59–77.

or head tax, applied to Jews and minorities, or at least bore the weight of discriminatory stigma.[22] Leo III, according to Zonaras, executed his anti-Orthodox policy in southern Italy by "imposing on the Sicilians and the Calabrians new taxes, specifically, encumbering them with the *kephaletion*, as per the Jews."[23] Conspicuously lacking in this brief reference is any sense of the nature and quantity of this tax, leaving only a firm impression of a juridical-fiscal category reserved for the ethnically, politically or ideologically disempowered.

In the ninth century, one of the sources most difficult to interpret comes not from Byzantium, but from Persia, in the form of the *Book of Roads and Realms* by Ibn Khordadhbeh. According to Ibn Khordadhbeh, the Byzantine government "collects from the Jews and Magians one dinar annually."[24] Joshua Starr claimed that Ibn Khordadhbeh erroneously imputed the *jizyah* to the Byzantines, because it was a familiar concept to him in his native Muslim context.[25] The question still remains, however: Does the imperfection of Ibn Khordadhbeh's analogy necessarily prove it to be without basis in fact? In other matters of interest to Jewish history, Ibn Khordadhbeh's testimony has manifestly shaped Mediterranean historiography, so there is no *prima facie* reason to disregard his claim here.[26] If accurate or verisimilar, this description speaks directly to the problem of the Jewish tax, but as relates to the collective or individual modes of collection among the Jews, it remains silent.

Byzantine sources re-enter the fray in the ninth century. The iconoclastic Emperor Michael II – reviled by the Orthodox historians through whose eyes modern readers must be content to learn about him – supposedly favored the Jews.[27] In one of his official acts, Michael ostensibly rescinded their taxes in some measure. The Continuator of Theophanes' obviously tendentious account describes Michael as an unrepentant heretic who "oppressed the heritage of Christ … and declared the Jews completely free of taxes, for he loved and cherished them, esteeming them above

[22] S. Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," 165.
[23] J. Zonaras, *Compendium Historiarum*, ed. H. Wolf (Basle, 1557), vol. III, 86.
[24] Starr, *JBE*, 111, citing Ibn Kurdadhbah, *Kitab al masalik wa'l mamalik*, in *Journal Asiatique* 5 (1865), 480.
[25] Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," 105–6.
[26] Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 195, struggles evenhandedly with this more or less intractable problem.
[27] R. Bonfil, "Vision of Daniel," 120–3, argues that the apocalyptic text regrets the final defeat of Iconoclasm under Michael III as a negative development for the Jews, who associated the developments of the controversy with their own worsening position under the Macedonians. This brings new perspective to the more jaded assumption we would normally bring to the rule of Michael II, namely that he would not, for doctrinal purposes, free the Jews from taxes, especially in light of the persecution of Leo III, the founder of Iconoclasm.

all other men."[28] Naturally, this passage might refer to either a specific Jewish tax, or to regular taxes paid by Jews, but in either case, it raises basic historical problems.[29] The account grossly exaggerates, and Theophanes' Continuator does not bother to disguise his overweening bias against Jews and iconoclasts.

More believable because corroborated, the same source refers to ninth-century Jewish taxation under the founder of the Macedonian Dynasty, Basil I, who persecuted the Jews and attempted to convert them by any available means.[30] These means included, among other, more violent measures, financial incentives. Basil intended simultaneously to woo the Jews to Christianity and to highlight the oppressed state of those who cleaved to their ancestral faith. According to the Continuator of Theophanes, Basil "made offers [to converts] of appointment to office. He also promised to exempt them from the burden of their former taxes."[31] Andrew Sharf infers, as others have done, that "the language [of this account] might admit the interpretation that this was some special tax."[32] Gregory, the Metropolitan of Nicaea, criticizes the emperor for this policy of linking taxes to religion, and in so doing, appears to confirm the existence of certain financial burdens particular to the Jews. The Metropolitan refuses to acknowledge as a genuine Christian anyone who, in a state of misery such as he presumes the Jews to be in, comes to Christianity by dint of "being relieved of his stinking occupation [i.e. tanning] and fiscal burdens and all those [charges] which burden him."[33] A discriminatory quality of Jewish taxation does seem implied in these combined accounts, but, as with Ibn Khordadhbeh, they leave much to be desired in terms of explaining the mechanics of Jewish taxation, namely, whether the community itself was taxed, or the individuals in it.

The absence of direct sources from the tenth century forces reliance on indirect evidence. The lyrical *Apocalypse of Daniel* refers obliquely to a number of events in the political history of the Jews, and one of the lines in the poem mentions relief under Leo VI, the son and heir to Basil I, who put

[28] *Scriptores post Theophanem*, 61d; trans. Starr, *JBE*, 48, 105.

[29] Ibid. Nothing indicates a tax specific to the Jews.

[30] See the sources listed and translated in Starr, *JBE*, 127–8, 131, 133, and above, chap. 2, nn. 70–2. Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 72–3 (Eng.) and 8 (Heb.); Basil makes gentle overtures to Shephatiah, in an attempt to convert him, in brutal contrast to his subsequent destruction of Jewish communities.

[31] Starr, *JBE*, 133; NB: Starr mistakenly cites *Scriptores post Theophanem*, p. 347. The correct page is 341. See Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry," 105–6; Dölger, "Judensteuer," 11 (*Regesten*, no. 414); Andréadès, "Les Juifs et le fisc dans l'empire byzantin," 28–9.

[32] Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 67–8; Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 193–4.

[33] Dagron, "Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée," 318.

an end to his father's persecution of the Jews. According to the prophetic *Apocalypse*, "he will make a release and give freedom to the holy nation of the Most High, and the Lord of Lords will increase his kingdom."[34] Samuel Krauss entertained the theory that the "release" refers to tax relief, but no corroborative evidence supports this inference.[35] In the meanwhile, another source, a brief letter preserved in the Cairo Genizah, offers valuable historical information, but only potential hints at matters of taxation. Moshe Agura gives an impressionistic evaluation of the situation in mid tenth-century Byzantium, as he decries the difficulty of trying to make his way in the empire.[36] Ultimately, he seeks to emigrate to Egypt, where he expects to find a better life. Moshe, however, never mentions taxes, and his comments reflect a mood more than a particular condition.

An eleventh-century Genizah letter, one of the most contentious sources with respect to the question of the Jewish tax, recounts events surrounding the messianic ferment on the eve of the First Crusade. Before the Crusaders descended upon Greece, the Jews of Salonica considered themselves "in great security; free of the poll-tax (*gulgolet*) and other levies (*'onashim*)."[37] The word *gulgolet* (literally meaning "skull"), as Joshua Starr's translation indicates here, clearly implies something akin to poll tax (or more probably, in terms of the distribution of the financial burden, a hearth or household tax). Lexically echoing the discriminatory *kephaletion* under Leo III, this *gulgolet* may represent a special tax. Nevertheless, Sharf seems to follow Starr; he identifies the *kephaletion* with the generic *kapnikon*, or hearth tax, a standard levy on individual households with no unique association with the Jews.[38] However, despite Starr's and Sharf's common interpretation, the word *'onashim* strongly implies a persecutorial tax, as it literally means "punishment" or "oppression."[39] Even granting that, to some degree, all taxes were viewed as oppressive, the basic meaning of

[34] Sharf, "The Vision of Daniel," 121. Judging from the fact that the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* also refers to the ascension of Leo VI and highlights the fact that he "annulled the edict that was decreed in the days of his father," it seems clear that this text refers to the release from persecution; see Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 74 (Eng.), 8 (Heb.). This MS apparently has no call number, and can be found with bibliography in S. Shaked, *A Tentative Bibliography of Geniza Documents* (Paris and The Hague, 1964), 182, no. 8.

[35] S. Krauss, "Un nouveau texte pour l'histoire judéo-byzantin," *REJ* 87 (1929): 9; Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 194.

[36] Holo, "Correspondence," 11, " … we only just now came, but could not succeed," and passim.

[37] Starr, *JBE*, 205; Neubauer, "Egyptian Fragments," 26–9; Mann, "The Messianic Movements during the First Crusades," 253–9.

[38] A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 191; Ankori, *Karaites*, 183, citing the Karaite commentary, *Sefer ha-osher*, which also uses the word *gulgolet*.

[39] Starr, *JBE*, 17, offers a lexical argument clearly intended to counterbalance the rather compelling plain-sense meaning of the word, in order to defend his claims that there was no Jewish tax; on p. 14, he discusses the *kephaletion* as a hearth tax, apparently concurrent with Oikonomides, below, n. 44.

the word *'onashim* (sing. *'onesh*) seems to belie Starr's neutral translation as mere "levies."[40]

Thus far, the evidence seems to point relatively unambiguously to the existence of a Jewish tax, intended as a tool of discrimination but evidently only part of the Jews' total tax burden. A stricter translation of the Hebrew letter would read: "free of the poll tax and oppressive measures" (absent the word "other"). Granting that we may not be able to establish firm connections, in a technical sense, between Hebrew terms and known Byzantine taxes, this letter nonetheless confirms the inference that, independent of a discriminatory tax, or '*onesh*, the Jews also paid a generic, individually assessed one, or *gulgolet*. In other words, insofar as minor or irregular, a special Jewish tax need not correlate to the notion of collective, *regular* Jewish taxation, such as had governed negotiations during the early Byzantine period.[41] Indeed, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there is no evidence that the Jewish communities internally assessed themselves and presented the government with a lump sum based on a collective, contractually defined status.

In another vein, some sources correlate the discriminatory quality of taxes to collective responsibility for their payment, while simultaneously presuming regular, individual taxation among Jewish households. The first example spans the second half of the eleventh century and legislates the remission of Jewish taxes to a monastery on the island of Chios. First instituted by Constantine IX in 1049 and later confirmed by Constantine X in 1062 and Nicephoros III in 1079, this series of chrysobulls demands that the local Jews pay for the building and maintenance of the monastery called Nea Mone.[42] Not merely remitting the taxes of the Jews to the monastery, Constantine IX actually changed their status from "entirely free," to "subject to said monastery."[43] Nevertheless, neither Constantine nor his successors intended the reallocated impost to increase the Jews' original, net tax liability; rather the Jews, were to "be exempted from all [other] taxation on the condition of payment of the *kephaletion* to the monastery."[44]

[40] On the neutral use of the word '*onashim* as a tax, see Ankori, *Karaites*, 300, who interprets the word along the lines of Starr.

[41] *CTh*. 16.8.29; Nov. Just. 45; Linder, *Imperial Legislation*, 320–2, 393–8; Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," 165.

[42] Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 195. Zepos and Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, I, 633, 640, 643 for Constantine IX, X and Nicephorus III, respectively; translated and analyzed by P. Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 63–92.

[43] Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 64, 70–1.

[44] Ibid., 64. Cf. Starr, *JBE*, 14–15, 197–203. N. Oikonomides, "The Role of the Byzantine State in the Economy," in *EHB*, 1028, according to whom the problem of this tax's name may be solved if we treat it as the *kephalaion*, a tax named for the office of the collector, whereby "the commanders (*kephalai*)

In terms of the relationship between the collective taxation of the Jews and the discriminatory taxation of the same, the example of Chios leads us to two conclusions. First, the question of discrimination becomes one of religious symbolism and not economic burden, as per the original scholarly consensus. The language of the original decree leaves little doubt as to its ideological and polemical context, invoking as it does the Augustinian principle that the Jewish population must remain "in subjection to the Christian."[45] In other words, what David Nirenberg calls the "inherited discourse" of anti-Judaism is at the disposal of the authorities to channel politically or fiscally, as they see fit.[46] However, this patently antagonistic language justified a political-economic course of collective taxation with *minimal* fiscal impact on the Jews. It attaches only symbolic discriminatory weight to placing the Jews under the yoke of the monastery, while in practical terms, its entire purpose is to redistribute taxes without necessarily raising them.[47]

Second, the case of Chios clearly links this anti-Jewish rhetoric to collective taxation, but crucially, it emerges from and takes for granted a prevailing system of taxation in which the Jews have no special status, for good or ill. Under the terms of all three chrysobulls, the Jews of Chios became subject, as a group, to the monastery, effectively – though not explicitly – reducing the Jews to the status of *paroikoi* by tying them to a particular authority and piece of land (even though there is no reason to imagine that they became *paroikoi* in the fullest sense, usually associated with farming).[48] The collective aspect of this status finds voice in the 1049 chrysobull, which applies to the fifteen Jewish families "throughout the island" – to all appearances meaning the island's entire Jewish population and aggregating them into a single fiscal

of the towns … were entitled to collect their fees directly from the taxpayers (the *dikaia tou kephalaitikiou*), which did not pass through the hands of the *praktor*." On the other hand, in his assessment of the longstanding debate regarding the discriminatory quality of Jewish taxation, Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 88–9, follows Dölger, and argues that the term *kephaletion* must refer, in a specific and technical sense, to a Jewish tax. For the purposes of the present argument, however, the presence of discrimination is only one component in using economics to measure societal relationships, to be balanced with that of collectivization.

[45] Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 64–5.

[46] D. Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence* (Princeton, 1996), 6; cf. Ankori, *Encounter*, 26, for a similar argument regarding Greek Jewry specifically.

[47] Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 72–3, acknowledges that the yoke borne by the Jews is difficult to measure in terms of its onus, but he clearly sees both the spirit of the decree, its anti-Jewish rhetoric and the actual effect of the decree as discriminatory.

[48] The tie to the land in a territorial sense is most explicit in the chrysobull of 1062, the Jews are "obliged to reside in the premises belonging to the monastery, near their appointed overlord," as per Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 67. On a similar situation, see Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 111; A. Andréadès, "Deux livres récents sur les finances byzantines," *BZ* 28 (1928): 315. Cf. this relationship in a non-Jewish context, Lefort, "The Rural Economy," 286.

unit.[49] The legal process of revenue redistribution, however, qualifies the historical significance of this collective tax status. As Nicolas Oikonomides sees it, the transference of the Jews' revenues falls under the mechanism of the *exkousseia*, the function of which speaks directly the collective or individual taxation of those who fall under it. The *exkousseia* normally places dependent farmers under the umbrella of the estate holder and taxes them as a class, in exchange for which they receive, individually, relief from the hearth tax.[50] Here, the Jews become dependants of the Nea Mone, and remit their hearth taxes to its construction and upkeep, in exchange for which they are excused from their *kephaletion*.[51] Naturally enough, the Jewish corporate identity lent itself to collectivization of taxation when convenient, but the case of Chios also seems to indicate that, *de jure*, the presumed, prior mode of Jewish taxation was individual. It was, after all, the pre-existing poll tax (probably some parallel to the *kapnikon*, or hearth tax) that the *exkousseia* transferred into collective contributions to the monastery.[52] Characteristically, the Jewish position reflects the simultaneity of their outsider and insider statuses. As *eleutheroi*, they presumably traded, manufactured and paid taxes as individuals, but as members of a readily recognized community, the Jews were still prone to being corralled into a collectivity (though absent the term *paroikos*, their connection to the monastery seems to fall under no standard category).

Another case raises interesting possibilities in reconfiguring the relationship between collective and discriminatory taxation. In the mid twelfth century, "the Strobilote Jews, wherever they be found," remitted their regular taxes to finance renovations of Hagia Sophia, in parallel fashion to the Jews of Chios. Dispersed as they evidently were, Strobilote Jews also apparently paid their taxes individually until enactment of this decree, which similarly pooled their resources as an *exkousseia*. Additionally, that dispersion of Strobilote Jewry raises another, unique and fascinating question

[49] Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 76–7, for a cogent argument for including all of the island's Jews in our understanding of the decree's scope. P. Magdalino, "Enlightenment and Repression in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: the Evidence of the Canonists," in *Byzantium in the 12th Century*, ed. N. Oikonomides (Athens, 1991), 368.

[50] On the *exkoussation*, see N. Oikonomides, "The Jews of Chios (1049), a Group of Excusati," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 10/1–2 (1995): 221, 224, and Oikonomides, "The Role of the Byzantine State in the Economy," 1024; and for Chios as the first example of this exemption, P. Charanis, "The Monastic Properties and the State in the Byzantine Empire," *DOP* 4 (1948): 65–6; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 20. See also N. Svoronos, "Les privilèges de l'église a l'époque des Comnènes: un rescrit inédit de Manuel Ier Comnène," *Travaux et Mémoires* 1 (1965): 325–91, esp. p. 329.

[51] Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 27, 43, 248, where the Jews of Ioannina and Zichna have a status as possessions of the local monasteries.

[52] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 103.

in regard to Jewish shipping interests. The remittance of the Jews' taxes is paired, in the same phrase, with an "exemption [from taxes] on ships bearing 30,000," and it is not clear whether the rescission of taxes on cargo ships relates to the Jews.[53] If it does, as per the logic of the *exkousseia*, the implications for Jewish shipping interests are great, but in any case this exemption would also support the prior assumption of individual taxation, as it explicitly applies to individual ships and their agents.

From the collected evidence, there is little doubt but that the reality of Jewish communal institutions naturally encouraged a general perception of their collective fate. But it also seems that the fisc functioned, at least in the last two centuries under investigation, on the assumption of individual taxation among the Jews. Thus, the fisc might remit Jewish taxes as a collectivity in Chios and Strobilos, but the terminology and classification of those taxes indicate a prior assumption of individual responsibility for payment. What is more, there is no reason to believe that any official Jewish body mediated in the process of collection or negotiation. The implications of this fiscal standing mirror wider tensions in the nature of being Jewish in Byzantium. On the one hand, this capacity for collectivization reflects religious discrimination; if there were any doubt, the dedication of the Jews' tax revenues to the upkeep of church institutions would quell it. As such, these cases demand some appreciation of anti-Jewish sentiment, perhaps more than twentieth-century scholars were willing to admit.[54] On the other hand, the cases of Chios and Strobilos bring some clarity to the legal-economic status of the Jews. Both cases circumscribe the Jews' power as an *imperium in imperio*; moreover, by invoking a well-established principle, the *exkousseia*, the state enforced taxation in a manner that leveled the status of all subjects.[55] From this collage of evidence, we might reasonably infer a basic degree of economic integration vis-à-vis the state, in which the Jew functioned first and foremost as subject of the realm, and only secondly as a minority.[56]

[53] Zepos and Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, I, 380. Starr, *JBE*, 228, erroneously translates the passage as referring to 40,000 units. Unfortunately, the text offers no direct connection between the Jews and the vessels, reflected in the silence of Starr, *JBE* on p. 15. Starr is correct in choosing Strobilos on the southwestern coast of Asia minor, which seems more likely than Krauss's opinion, of the Strobilote islands; see Krauss, "Un nouveau texte," 24, n. 3. On the context of the legislation, see Dölger, *Regesten*, I, pt. 2, 69–70, no. 1390. See C. Foss, "Strobilos and Related Sites," in *History and Archaeology of Byzantine Asia Minor* (London, 1990), 147–74. See also, Jacoby, "Byzantine Asia Minor," 90.

[54] Starr, *JBE*, 17; D. Jacoby, "Benjamin of Tudela in Byzantium," *Palaeoslavica* 10/1 (2002): 184. The possibility of taxation in kind, which might speak to the issue of collective taxation, was not specific to the Jews, but to the merchandise, i.e., silk, according to Benjamin's relation.

[55] Laiou, "Institutional Mechanisms," 178.

[56] Baron, *History*, IV, 153, also finds no indication of a special tax burden.

On the other side of the taxation coin, one source from the twelfth century describes Byzantine Jews as tax farmers, and comparison to Jews in other countries raises the possibility that in the empire they practiced that profession in significant numbers.[57] According to an outgoing archbishop on Cyprus in the early twelfth century, the Jews rapaciously exacted taxes from the island's clergy:

> The priests, to whom it was formerly necessary to offer a portion of one's life, now contribute a share of the taxes. Christians … are ruled by descendants of the Hebrews and are chastised by them! … These depraved modern Jews … they stir them up against the teachers, prosecuting the defenders of God … assessing upon them tens of thousands of silver-pieces.[58]

Ostensibly, this plaintive poem describes a situation in which the Jews imposed taxes on the Cypriot clergy, but a series of problems limits the plausibility of a literal interpretation. The long-observed restrictions on the Jews in the civil service and the polemical tone of the source at hand leave little doubt that the Jews did not collect taxes for the Byzantine government.[59] Additionally, the term "Jew" served as a common trope for the assailants of the Church or Church doctrine, and it might easily function as such in this passage.[60] One wonders if the translation of the Jews as "modern" (νέους) best captures the meaning. If read as "latter-day Jews," the paragraph might refer to Christians perceived to be descendants of Jews or ideologically aligned with Jews, the paradigmatic enemy. Alternatively, it may indeed refer to actual Jews. But if so, it stands alone among all the references to Jews and taxation in the Byzantine Empire so that the solitariness of this poem's accusation of Jewish tax farming renders it the exception that proves the rule of Jewish exclusion from the civil service. In short, it is surely safe to conclude that, as contributors to the royal coffers, the Jews' participation took the form of tax payment, not collection.

[57] S. Baron *et al.*, *Economic History of the Jews*, ed. N. Gross (Jerusalem, 1975), 32, 46–7; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 73.

[58] S. I. Doanidou, "The Resignation of Nikolaos Mouzalon from the Archbishopric of Cyprus: an Unpublished Apologetic Poem," *Hellenika* 7 (1934): 130f., 11. 656–60, 679–84, 691–5, reprinted in Starr, *JBE*, 218.

[59] Starr, *JBE*, 18–19. Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 67, points out the weight of this exclusion "from service in the armed forces or in any government position … The empire had a vast and properly functioning civil service, including many lucrative posts, very different from the shaky urban administrations of the fifth and sixth centuries in which responsibilities were often imposed as penalties."

[60] Regarding Michael II, see *Scriptores post Theophanem*, 56c–d. For Leo III, see John of Damascus, *Adversus Constantinum*, PG 95, 336, esp. 336a, on the iconoclastic emperors who thrust themselves into the "pit" or "breach" (βάραθρον) of the Jews, and 336c, on Leo III who was promised kingship by a sorcerer-Jew. On this last legend, see: J. Starr, "An Iconodulic Legend and its Historical Basis," *Speculum* 8 (1933): 500–3, and Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm*.

Distinct from the problem of taxation altogether, the question of fines is subject to at least two ambiguities of historical analysis. First, a significant degree of autonomy among Jewish communities resulted in a series of internally imposed fines, which, by their very nature, stood apart from the Jews' role in the economy at large. Second, the line between a fine and a tax may in fact be imaginary, especially in light of the seventy-five-year scholarly debate over the nuances of Byzantine taxation of the Jews. With regard to the former question, the internal taxes constitute a separate issue, properly categorized under the internal Jewish economy. The latter problem simply raises the question of definition. Taxes exist a priori, requiring no particular action on the taxpayer's part to activate them. One pays them as the common contribution to the treasury, and action on the government's part precipitates them. Although they may punish, they are geared generally and primarily towards revenue-building. Fines, in contradistinction, require the specific action or infraction of the citizen or subject who pays. In addition, they seek, first and foremost, to punish financially.

The *Ecloga* of the iconoclastic Emperor Leo III provides the earliest post-Heraclian legislation which institutes fines against the Jews. Significantly, all of the fines imposed against the Jews actually originated in the much earlier canonical sources, the Codes of Theodosius and Justinian. They pithily illustrate how the government kept the door open, as early as the fifth century, for punitive action against the Jews.[61] Jews might be dunned for owning non-Jewish slaves or proselytizing (which was closely associated with slaveholding). From the Jewish perspective, the preservation of these laws assured that the Byzantine authorities could theoretically justify repression of Jews and Judaism. But, insofar as some of these laws were clearly obsolete – Jewish slaveholding had long ceased – these laws had only a limited practical effect. As with the *Ecloga*, which required the Jews to serve on the already-defunct city councils, these fines reflect mere conservatism or reflexive anti-Jewish attitudes.[62] Still, in theory the Byzantine emperors, in preserving

[61] Dölger and Starr listed these fines for easy access and provided cross-references. See Starr, *JBE*, 97–8 as well as the laws in the Basilika, ibid., 144–7, and all references.

[62] See above, n. 21. Leo III, *Ecloga ad Procheiron Mutata*, in Zepos and Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, VI, 297. There, 36.13, Leo III preserves the restrictions against Jews in military and civil service and the obsolete requirement to sit on the city councils. Leo VI finally eradicated the legislation concerning the city councils: P. Noailles and A. Pain, eds. and trans., *Les Novelles de Léon VI le Sage* (Paris, 1944), 182–4. The entire point of Leo VI is to eliminate precisely such outdated material from the books. His targeting the curial duties reveal how utterly they ceased to be a part of the Byzantine landscape by the tenth century. The sword of conservatism cut both ways, at least in the early period, when the Jews forestalled their conscription to the dreaded city councils by reference to their ancient privileges, *CTh* 6.8.13, 12.1.158. For easy reference, see A. Linder, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit, 1997).

these ancient fines, maintained the ability to enforce them, as long as they remained on the books.[63] Leo III, the promulgator of the legal handbook that included them, may have invoked these penalties in the course of his persecution of the Jews, although no such evidence exists.

Though the state authorized and enforced these fines, nothing prevented Jews from invoking or petitioning the state to exact fines for Jews' own purposes. The Karaite–Rabbanite schism and attendant disputes frequently resulted in exaggerated accusations in both directions, and since they did not necessarily recognize one another's authority in communitarian or legal matters, they sometimes resorted to the Byzantine government to enforce their claims. Though logic would dictate that the majority Rabbanites tended to enjoy the advantage in this type of conflict (and surely they won their share of the battles), the only documentary evidence from Byzantium describes the opposite.[64] In the eleventh century, the Karaites and Rabbanites of Salonica engaged in a particularly fierce dispute, resulting in victory for the Karaites, who successfully appealed to the Byzantine authorities to impose a fine on the Rabbanites.[65] In a letter from the Genizah, the fuming Rabbanite author named Elijah bitterly complains about this setback. Probably writing from Salonica, he recounts how

> God aroused them [i.e., the Karaites], and hatred and a great enmity fell between us and there were great disputes and they informed on the Rabbanites, which resulted in a fine [*onesh*] on the community of nearly 1,000 dinars *hyperpyra*.[66]

What is more, to judge from Elijah's frustration, it would appear that the Rabbanite community actually paid the heavy fine.

Modern controversy has grown up around this document regarding the content and the date. The main issue at hand is the meaning of the Hebrew word איפרפיר/'YPRPYR, which Mann convincingly interpreted

[63] Cf. Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 91, in regard to the so-called "Jewish tax" and its irregular enforcement, makes a parallel argument about discriminatory taxation, used as "a 'Sword of Damocles' hanging over the heads of all Jews in the empire, that fell whenever and wherever the arbitrary rulers in Constantinople thought expedient."

[64] Ankori, *Karaites*, 55, n. 76; 328ff.; Ankori, "Karaite–Rabbanite Relations," 2–4; Mann, *Texts*, I, 45, 50; Starr, *JBE*, 184, 243. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, xliii–l, 289–93, points out how the claims of Ibn Da'ud against the Spanish Karaites are largely ahistorical posturing.

[65] Mann deduces, on the basis of paleography, that this Byzantine letter comes from the eleventh century, Mann, *Texts*, I, 45. In addition, the Karaites began to relax their dependence on the spring korn in Palestine for the purposes of determining their calendar in the twelfth century; ibid., 46. If indeed from the eleventh century, it must be very late, since the *hyerpyron* was not introduced until the last quarter of that century.

[66] T-S 20.45 in Mann, *Texts*, I, 51, ll. 26–7, who transcribes אפרנייר, i.e., 'YPRNYYR. However, scrutiny of the MS reveals that the word is in fact איפרפיר, i.e., 'YPRPYR. Mann correctly surmised that the coin called *hyperpyron* was intended, in spite of his impression of the MS. See below, Appendix B.

as the high-quality, Byzantine gold coin, the *hyperpyron*, despite his misreading of the consonants.[67] Scholars subsequently attacked the eleventh-century dating, since they mistakenly believed the *hyperpyron* to have originated only in the thirteenth century. More recent monetary studies have put that objection entirely to rest.[68] In fact, the *hyperpyron* dates from 1092, and this fact helps, therefore, to provide a *terminus post quem* for the date of the letter, which Mann had already concluded, on paleographical grounds, to have hailed from the eleventh century.[69] Thus, in a comparatively rare breaking of ranks among the Jewish population, the lively Karaite–Rabbanite debate brought the Byzantine government into the heart of Jewish affairs at the end of the eleventh century, with the result of a weighty fine.[70]

Finally, the threat of a fine, enacted in 1062, served to enforce the charter of 1049, according to which the Jews of Chios continued to be subject to the local monastery.[71] Constantine X reconfirmed their status as established under the earlier charter, and further set the punitive terms of the Jews' habitation on the island. According to these conditions, "These fifteen [Jewish] families shall remain in the dwellings owned by the monastery and under its control, under penalty of triple the poll tax and the rent."[72] This particular threat illustrates the limitations of the fine for revenue collection, be it among the Jews or anyone else. Standing fines are intended to inhibit or promote given behaviors, and they succeed in inverse proportion to the revenue they generate. Thus, barring evidence to the contrary, it may be assumed that though fines governed some Jewish activities, they did not play a major role in the financial contribution of the Jews to the empire's coffers.

MECHANISMS AND MEANS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

If government taxation bypassed Jewish communal autonomy in finances and thereby established its limits, the commercial dealings of the Jews, in

[67] Also called, in Greek: *purpuratus* and *perperum*; see Hendy, *Alexius I to Michael VIII*, 43.

[68] Ankori, *Karaites*, 33f., n. 77, 328–34, follows Andréadès, "De la monnaie et la puissance d'achat des métaux précieux dans l'empire byzantin," 75; Goitein, "Saloniki and Thebes," 14, n. 14; and S. Krauss, "Zu Dr. Manns Historischen Texten," *HUCA* 10 (1935): 291. Not only does the coin date to the eleventh century, but Hendy, "Byzantium, 1081–1204: an Economic Reappraisal," no. 2, 43, associates it with the revival of the Byzantine currency under Alexios I Comnenos.

[69] P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coinage*, 2nd edn. (Washington, D.C., 1999), 11, 44; Hendy, *Coinage and Money*, chap. 3, esp. 34–7; Hendy, *Alexius I to Michael VIII*, 43. See also P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London, 1982), 215–17.

[70] For the value of the hyperpyron in this period, see the tables in C. Morrisson and J.-C. Cheynet, "Prices and Wages," 832–56.

[71] See above, nn. 42–52.

[72] Zepos and Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, I, 640; Oikonomides, "The Jews of Chios," 220.

opposite fashion, relied directly on and strengthened their internal organization. The inward infrastructural orientation of Jewish life, a nexus of religious, legal, linguistic, ethnic and economic associations, afforded the Jews a means for efficient and voluminous trade in the open markets, in the same way that other populations relied on the apparatus of state for similar advantages.[73] Today, we cannot look back into the distant past and discern the precise chronological evolution of this synergy. That is, to argue that the religious demands of diasporic Judaism resulted in a system that favored trade, or inversely, that the realities of dispersed communication shaped Jewish legal and social mechanisms, devolves inevitably into a chicken-and-egg argument. The origins of Jewish trade in any case predate the Middle Byzantine period. We can, however, identify a remarkable confluence of interests within the Jewish infrastructure, as the inner Jewish economy and its counterpart, the external one that served as a bridge to society at large, mutually fueled each other.[74] If the Mediterranean Jewish market for their staple goods, such as textiles, thrived at the international level, then it did so in large part due to the maintenance of this inner infrastructure. By capitalizing on the cohesion – even insularity – derived from their communal enforcement of law, overseas communication, and their relationship to Constantinopolitan guilds, Byzantine Jewry managed great success in a few, but central, industries of the empire at large.[75]

Because the Jewish network defined itself in terms of overlapping social, religious and commercial interactions, the Jews, even in their financial and commercial exploits, held themselves to a set of standards determined by their common customs and religious law.[76] Avner Greif has studied the application of medieval Jewish law to commerce, and refers to that cohesive religious, legal and commercial unit as a coalition.[77] Greif takes a group of Jews from North Africa, collectively termed Maghribi in many documents from the Cairo Genizah, as the paradigmatic case of the overseas coalition. Among these Maghribi Jews, a highly sophisticated economic

[73] For other intrinsic advantages of the Jewish merchants, see Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio," 437–9.

[74] S. Menache, "Introduction: 'The Pre-History' of Communication," and "Communication in the Jewish Diaspora: a Survey," both in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora*, ed. S. Menache (Leiden, 1996), 1–14, 15–58.

[75] Jacoby, "Les Juifs: protections, divisions, ségrégation," 173.

[76] De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 303–5 edits and annotates a Greek glossary of Hebrew words from the basic code of Jewish law, the Mishnah, including words associated with the marketplace, especially regarding textiles, dyes and perhaps spices; Graboïs, "The Use of Letters as a Communication Medium among Medieval European Jewish Communities," 100.

[77] A. Greif, "Reputation and Coalitions in Medieval Trade: Evidence on the Maghribi Traders," *Journal of Economic History* 49/4 (1989): 859; Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy* (Cambridge, 2006), 58–90.

and social infrastructure underlay their ability to compete in the international Mediterranean market of the tenth through twelfth centuries. Membership in this group brought with it a series of long-term economic benefits, based on access to the network through which one could, without fear of theft, deposit goods or enter into a joint venture with fellow members.[78] Honesty was assured by the threat of exclusion from the group. And since the enduring benefits of membership far outweighed the potential for short-term gain by dishonest means, that threat assured smooth dealings among themselves – even in commerce particularly susceptible to loss by theft or embezzlement on account of great distances and long periods of absence. Cognate forms of this Maghribi coalition characterized medieval Jewish communities throughout the world, in matters not only economic, but also political and social.[79]

At the heart of the coalition lay the capacity to effectively enforce excommunication, whereby the guilty or suspected party was forced to make amends, or cease to be a functioning member of the Jewish community. Unless a Jew actively sought to join the dominant religion of the land (with its own contingent benefits), excommunication removed him from both his social and personal community, as well as his economic one. In a society without far-reaching means of physical enforcement, excommunication, also called the ban, provided the negative incentive necessary for communal rule.[80] What is more, the force of the ban extended well beyond the local community; rabbis in different countries and even rival rabbis often respected one another's decrees of excommunication, rendering the practical consequences of this punishment quite dire.[81] Much more than merely an economic device, this mechanism undergirded the entire edifice of Jewish law and rabbinical authority, all the more efficient, it would seem, for the fact that submission to it was essentially voluntary.

Two different cases from the Byzantine world speak to the question of voluntary compliance, though they evince religious motives and consequences, as opposed to economic ones. According to the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*, a poet named Silano had, in jest, offended a visiting sage. For his impertinence, R. Silano remained under the ban until the story's hero, R. Ahima'az,

[78] Cf. Y. Ragheb, "Marchands d'Égypte du VIIe au IXe siècle d'après leur correspondance et leurs actes," in *Le marchand au moyen âge* (Saint-Herblain, 1992), 26.

[79] Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, chap. 2, and Agus, *Urban Civilization*, 31.

[80] Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, 6–20.

[81] Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, 49–50 (Eng.), 67–8 (Heb.). The cheapening of the ban, in which accusations and excommunications were bandied around without any real consequence, was a product of later generations.

inspired the community to forgive him on the Day of Atonement.[82] In a similarly religious context, Benjamin of Tudela describes the island of Cyprus, where "there are Rabbanites and Karaites, in addition to heretical Jews, atheists whom the Jewish community excommunicates everywhere, because they desecrate the Sabbath eve [i.e., Friday night], and observe Saturday evening [as the Sabbath]."[83]

In these two examples, the differing assumptions behind the bans characterize its potential and its limits as a form of community governance. The objects of the ban on Cyprus, probably members of the Mishawite heresy, obviously did not seek re-admittance to the Jewish community on the terms of their mainstream rivals. In that case, excommunication merely expressed its exponents' religious identity, in the hopes that this expression would clarify and strengthen the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy. Bans of commercial control, however, cannot afford such low expectations.[84] In quite a different fashion, the *Ahima'az* text presumes that the object of the ban, the poet Silano, suffered from its imposition and benefited commensurately from its removal, in a manner closer to that which characterized excommunication for commercial malfeasance.

If the ban was to serve commercial functions, it needed to threaten exclusion from a system that apportioned appreciable benefits to its members. Unfortunately, no Byzantine-Jewish source regarding the ban speaks precisely to questions of commerce, but two sources do describe a Byzantine commercial cooperative arrangement, such as would naturally govern itself by means of excommunication. Jacob b. Reuben describes a profit-sharing arrangement that recalls the *commenda*, known as *heter isqa'* in Hebrew, whereby coreligionists might circumvent prohibitions on interest-bearing loans. Instead of lending money on interest, a capital investor partners with someone who offers to invest time and labor. The capital investor then earns a prearranged premium on his investment, which substitutes for the interest he would have gained on a loan; meanwhile, the cash-poor partner gets access to capital just as he would with credit.[85] Though serving to distribute resources in a manner similar to that of simple credit, the *commenda* offers

[82] Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 68–9; 5–6 (Heb.). [83] Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, secs. 16, 23.

[84] Ankori, *Karaites*, 54–7, 386–8, argues both for the identification of this Cypriot group as the Mishawites and for the role of establishing lines of solidarity and distinction from within the various Jewish groups. S. Poznański, "Meswi al-Okbari, chef d'une secte juive du IXème siècle," *REJ* 34 (1897): 169–80, outlines the precise position and argument of the Mishawites regarding the counting of the legal day from the dawn, as opposed to the previous night, as is dominant throughout the Jewish world.

[85] See A. Udovitch, *At the Origins of the Western Commenda* (Princeton, 1969); J. Pryor, "The Origins of the Commenda Contract," *Speculum* 52/1 (1977), 6–7.

flexibility in the precise terms of the distribution of risk, and though it changed over time and according to local custom, the *commenda* and the variations on it loomed large in the commercial development of both the Christian West and the Byzantine Empire.[86] Jacob describes the *commenda* as "the custom of merchants that, when they get access to highly profitable merchandise, the traders would join in partnership and share [the profit] among themselves."[87] Jacob's silence on the question of the ban naturally precludes any firm conclusions, but if Greif's model for Jewish trade coalitions applies, it follows that Byzantine-Jewish trade partnerships instituted the ban as the negative incentive, that is, the proverbial stick of self-governance.

This form of communal autonomy and enforcement went hand-in-hand with the legal status as a disenfranchised, religious minority. Accordingly, the Jews suffered, *de jure*, the disfavor of dominant religious policy and partial exclusion from mainstream institutions and networks. Regardless of the Jews' ability to muster commercial strength, they necessarily organized themselves outside of the official economic structures. The most important such structure, the guild system, regulated the various stages of production and trade in the essential sectors of the Constantinopolitan economy. The *Book of the Eparch* – the legal handbook that establishes the terms of the guilds' trade relationships – appears to exclude the Jews from its purview. Though one recension of the *Book of the Eparch* contains a Jewish oath, whereby the Jews might have given valid testimony and thereby participated in the system, the text of the oath was in all probability interpolated in the twelfth century under Manuel I.[88] Moreover, the specific context of the oath, namely litigation between the Jewish community and an apostate

[86] A. Laiou, "Byzantium and the Commercial Revolution," 242–6, points out that the precise nature of the commenda in Byzantium defies easy definition; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 171.

[87] Jacob b. Reuben, *Sefer ha-'osher* [*The Book of Riches*] (Gozlow, 1834), in Aaron b. Joseph, *Sefer ha-mibhar*, comment on Job 4:30, 11b (apud Ankori, *Karaites*, p. 170, n. 5), describes the "coalition" of Byzantine Jews in their trade dealings and profit-sharing arrangements. See A. L. Udovitch, *Partnership and Profit in Medieval Islam* (Princeton, 1970), 256–9.

[88] Lopez, "Silk Industry," 23–4, argues that the original *BE* did not contain this Jewish oath, thereby rendering Manuel's reference (Zepos and Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, I, 375) an interpolation. While I agree with Lopez's argument about the Jews' being exlcuded from the guilds until Manuel I, I disagree with his belief, p. 23, that they suffered any negative consequences from such exclusion. See also: R. S. Lopez, "The Role of Trade in the Economic Readjustment of Byzantium in the Seventh Century," *DOP* 13 (1959), 83; A. Galanté, *Les Juifs de Constantinople sous Byzance* (Istanbul, 1940), 51. Sharf, "An Unknown Messiah," 142, and Sharf, "Shabbetai Donnolo as Byzantine Jewish Figure," in *Jews and Other Minorities*, 163–4, disagrees with Lopez. Likewise, Muthesius, "Essential Processes," 166, n. 105, believes that the implications of the oaths *more iudaico* are sufficient to prove that the Jews were in fact members of the guilds. However, Lopez's explanation has the benefit of harmonizing the exclusion of the Jews with the inimical passage in the *BE*, 6.14, which excludes them from silk export.

Jew, renders it a forensic tool and not an economic one.[89] Against this view is that of Zvi Ankori, who sees the subsumption of the tanners' guild under the authority of the leather softeners' guild as proof of the former's Jewishness (and the key to their geographical segregation in the capital and elsewhere).[90] It seems, however, a stretch to attribute Jewishness to a guild, solely on this account. Rather, their exclusion left two perfectly viable options for Jewish textile workers: to work either independently or in the employ of another party who cold afford to hire out labor.[91] While both of these possibilities might have coexisted, the collected sources imply that this non-guild Jewish labor was organized within an independent Jewish context. Jewish tanning and textile production and trade thrived, echoing a more ancient reality of the fifth and sixth centuries when no non-Jew might "set the prices for the Jews when they put their merchandise up for sale."[92] In fact, Jewish non-membership in the guilds can be understood as a defining characteristic of their commercial infrastructure and, counter-intuitively, of their success.[93] As David Jacoby has inferred, the Jews probably belonged to the classes of silk workers known as the *serikarioi*, *katartarioi* and the *melathrarioi*, despite their exclusion from the state guilds. They practiced in the broader private sector, and through their unofficial connections to the monopolistic guilds that controlled the silk supply, they gained access to silken material for processing and sale on their own.[94] Arguing this scenario, Jacoby actively rejects – based on the silence of the sources – the inference that the Jews had their own, corresponding guild.[95] Rather, the Jews needed no guild; their ethnic distinctiveness and internal structures functioned as one and served their purposes efficiently.

Though lacking the obvious benefits of enfranchisement and political power, the Jews – even prior to their participation in the guilds, if that ever happened – fully enjoyed the advantages of their own, internal system of exchange, itself international and virtually unregulated by Constantinople.[96] Indeed, the *Book of the Eparch*, in its explicit pursuit of economic control, organized the guilds in a manner entirely antithetical to the Jewish business infrastructure, and as such, it behooved the Jews to remain outside its

[89] Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry," 14.
[90] Ankori, *Karaites*, 176, n. 28; Ankori, *Encounter*, 128–30.
[91] D. Jacoby, "Benjamin of Tudela in Byzantium," 184. [92] *CTh* 16.8.10 and *CJ* 1.9.9.
[93] Cf. A. Greif, "Trading Institutions and the Commercial Revolution in Medieval Europe," in *Economics in a Changing World*, 5 vols., ed. A. Aganbegyan *et al.* (New York, 1992), vol. I, 115–25.
[94] Jacoby, "Jews and the Silk Industry," 14–19.
[95] Jacoby, "Les Juifs: protections, divisions, ségrégation," 178.
[96] S. Vryonis, "Byzantine Demokratia and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century," *DOP* 17 (1963): 294–300; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, I, 377.

purview.[97] The *Book of the Eparch* enforced a vertical diversification of trades, while it encouraged the horizontal integration of the same. In a vertically diversified system, the producers of a given good may not directly engage in any other stage of production of that same good; and under no circumstances may they sell that good on the resale market.[98] In such a system, the necessary dealings between the various stages, from production all the way down to the final retail sale, are highly regulated. The *Book of the Eparch* demands, for example, that "every person exercising at one and the same time the craft of silk merchant and silk dyer shall be put to the election to choose one or the other of these crafts to the exclusion of the other."[99] Thus, each sector of a given production line was strictly delimited in its activities, lest it gain too much economic clout. In compensation for this restrictive compartmentalization, each guild benefited from a monopoly, or virtual monopoly, in its particular sector of the economy. In this regard, the *Book of the Eparch* created a horizontally integrated market whereby the guild experienced no direct or significant competition.[100] True to these dual purposes, the *Book of the Eparch* does not merely regulate aspects of guild functions but, more pointedly, seeks to control the interaction among them.[101]

This legal-commercial organization originated in the current preference for healthy stability in trade and services and for zealous governmental control of certain types of wealth.[102] In organizing individual monopolies, each one of which was isolated from its allied industries, the government maximized its ability to regulate the points of contact between the guilds and the public, and among the guilds themselves.[103] And ideally, in

[97] The Jewish ability to control the prices of their wares without interference from the state dates back to 396, as preserved in *CTh*; see Linder, *Imperial Legislation*, 72, 194–5. Without proving continuity, this fourth-century decree nontheless established precedent.

[98] For a specific outline of the various silk guilds and their work, see A. Muthesius, "The Byzantine Silk Industry, Lopez and Beyond," *Journal of Medieval History* 19 (1993): 31–46; Muthesius, "Essential Processes," 160–5.

[99] *BE* 4.7 (as translated in the reprint of Nicole's edition). Other cases include: the saddlers who are "forbidden to join up with the tanners" (14.2); the fishmongers who cannot buy the fish from the fisherman at sea, but rather, must subject their sale to scrutiny at the appropriate places on land (17.3); the dealers in bullion who cannot deal in any other cash sale (2.2). See A. Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World* (Oxford, 1973), 59–63, where the concern in silk takes on a more symbolic value than an economic one, though on p. 64, he remarks about the exclusion of the Jews as an exclusion of middlemen. The Jews, however, not only purveyors but also producers, were not middlemen.

[100] G. C. Maniatis, "The Organizational Setup and Functioning of the Fish Market in Tenth-Century Constantinople," *DOP* 54 (2000), 20.

[101] Macri, *L'organisation de l'économie urbaine*, 36; Dagron, "The Urban Economy," 411–14.

[102] Morrisson and Cheynet, "Prices and Wages in Byzantium," 858.

[103] Dagron, "The Urban Economy," 440.

controlling the urban economy, the eparch, also called the prefect, guaranteed the rights of guilds and consumers, as well as the provisioning of the capital in a reliable manner.[104] One such protection for the consumer was the regulation of prices; for example, the fishmongers lacked any power over the price of fish as sold to them by the fisherman, for they could not negotiate independently with the fisherman at the docks.[105] Rather, they were obliged to announce publicly the price they paid at shore, under the auspices of the prefect.[106] Since each guild bargained with the others for best price openly and under the watchful eye of the prefect of the city, they did not have the opportunity to collude. For these reasons, controlling the supply chain ranks as a high priority of the *Book of the Eparch*, though one can imagine that it also facilitated such functions as tax assessment as well.[107]

To this control and the particular form it took, the Jews presented a glaring exception. The Jews formed a coherent social, religious and economic unit that concentrated on the various aspects of two essential sectors of the economy: textiles and tanning.[108] Simply put, the Jews, though lacking the status of a statutory monopoly, nonetheless managed to integrate various stages of the manufacture and sale of the textiles in which they specialized. Attested as weavers, dyers and sellers, they posed a particular threat to the vertical diversification of the Byzantine urban economy as outlined in the *Book of the Eparch*; they could, unlike Christian guildmembers, easily negotiate among themselves at each point of production in the textile market.[109] Their flourishing in this market relied moreover, not merely on the infrastructure of their social, religious and economic communication, but equally on the consistency and antiquity of their

[104] Pork sellers could not hoard, but had to sell according the active supply (*BE* 16.5) just as the linen merchants must not hoard coins (*BE* 9.5); spice sellers had fixed prices, etc.

[105] Maniatis, "The Organizational Setup," 21–4; cf. Maniatis, "Operationalization of the Concept of Just Price in the Byzantine Legal, Economic and Political System," *Byzantian* 71 (2001): 168.

[106] *BE* 17.1, 17.3. [107] Dagron, "Urban Economy," 405–14. [108] Ibid., 439.

[109] On the correlation between production and sale, see Lopez, "Silk Industry," 18–19, and Holo, "Correspondence," 7–8. Cf. earlier Muslim integration in Egypt, Ragheb, "Marchands d'Égypte," 28.

Though no direct evidence of collusion has survived from the Byzantine Empire, other types of market manipulation occurred elsewhere in the Jewish world, particularly in the realm of real estate. See Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, 12–13, on the attempts to control the alienation of land to non-Jews in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. A similar, though not identical, principle is invoked in the law whereby a Jew can buy back his stolen property from another Jew at the price the latter obtained it, even if he had bought it by perfectly legitimate means – a Jew may not profit from the loss of another Jew, and so at yet another level, their economic lot is thrown together. See Agus, *Urban Civilization*, I, 71–2.

commitment to the textile industry.[110] Jacob b. Reuben illustrates this capacity in his commentary on the question of *sha'atnez*, the mixing of linen and wool that is prohibited in the Torah. Jacob decrees that "we may make and sell *sha'atnez* but we are not allowed to wear it ourselves."[111] Jacob's comment depicts vertical integration in two stages of the textile industry, manufacture and sale. At the very least, his unselfconscious remark on the possibility of both producing and selling different fibers implies that this capacity was more or less taken for granted. From this standpoint, Jews had no reason to give up their advantage in an otherwise adversarial guild system.[112]

For the Jews, who engaged in business relationships well beyond the jurisdiction of not only the *Book of the Eparch* but also the Byzantine government, adherence to the Constantinopolitan regulatory regime would have afforded few advantages and considerable disadvantages.[113] Though Jacoby argues that they obtained their raw materials from guild members, presumably illicitly, they may also have simply bought those goods from international Jewish merchants. This possibility emerges in the stark terms of the *Book of the Eparch* itself. The laws regarding the raw silk merchants abruptly exclude the Jews from the export of that commodity, for which two reasons seem most likely.[114] First, the Jews posed a threat to the strict control on the export of silk, which was regarded as the flight of capital.[115] Second, as the repetition of a ban on Jews from the ships of the Venetians

[110] The most famous and intriguing case of the intersection (and clash) of Jewish and state interests in the textile business also invokes its continuity over time. In the fourth century, Jews married and presumably coopted women of the imperial weaving establishment. See *CTh* 16.8.

[111] Ankori, *Karaites*, 175, nn. 25–7, citing Jacob ben Reuben, *Sefer ha-osher*, on Lev. 19:19.

[112] D. Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade," *BZ* 84–5 (1991–2): 476–9, argues that the Byzantine elite also sought to use their means to contract production for future sale, outside of the rigid guild system. C. M. Brand, "Did Byzantium Have a Free Market?" *BF* 26 (2000): 63–72, argues that the economy had *aspects* of freedom. One cannot help but notice that, even so, the Jews seemed to work outside those restrictions that did exist. Oikonomides, "The Role of the Byzantine State," 973, calls the pressure put by the government on the markets as "restraining," rather than "directing."

[113] See Dagron, "The Urban Economy," 426–32, for other systems that stood outside the purview of the *BE*.

[114] *BE*, 6.14. I disagree with Lopez, "Silk Industry," 23, who, in that classic article on the Byzantine silk industry, argues that the exclusion of the Jews owes its existence to general anti-Judaism. D. Jacoby, "The Byzantine Outsider in Trade," in *Strangers to Themselves: the Byzantine Outsider*, ed. D. C. Smythe (Aldershot, 2000), 133, believes that "there is no evidence that the status of the Jewish traders differed from that of their Christian counterparts." Indeed, the issue of legislation against the Jews, paired as it is with Amalfitans and others, is a reflection of their *economic* position – not religious or ethnic. For the interaction between Amalfitans and Jews, see below, n. 141.

[115] On the value of silk, see A. Muthesius, "The Hidden Element in Byzantium's Silk Industry," *BJGS* 10 (1992): 19–25, and Lopez, "Silk Industry," 1–3.

in 960 and 992 indicates, Jews as international traders posed the threat of competition and smuggling. Their disproportionate market share plausibly rested on the Jews' ability to organize domestic production and international sale internally, informally and, at least sometimes, illegally – in short, in a fashion incompatible with the guild structure as defined in the *Book of the Eparch*.[116]

If indeed outside (or, as David Jacoby argues, outside but connected to) the guild system, the Jews' experience typifies the confluence of interests between segregation and integration. The Jewish isolation from the mainstream system of guilds actually improved their ability to enter the marketplace. As a counter-example, the historical interpretation according to which the Jews did participate in the guilds reveals how deeply seated is the assumption that integration and segregation come at the expense of one another. Andrew Sharf argues that the Jews enjoyed inclusion in the guilds, and he arrives at this conclusion, in part, due to his overall perception of the Jews as integrated into Byzantine society.[117] That is, he makes an explicit link between social integration and the probability of inclusion in the guilds. The problem, however, takes on a different dimension when the assumption of mutual exclusivity between integration and segregation is abandoned. Here, David Jacoby's interpretation captures how the Jews maintained a foot in each market:

> In addition, there were independent dyers, weavers and tailors not registered in a guild nor working in the atelier of a guild member or an *archon*, who executed on their own or on other premises the work commissioned by the *serikarioi*, *archontes*, entrepreneurs, merchants or other customers, the latter in order to supply their own needs. These craftsmen either took advantage of their private connections to purchase the raw material they needed, or else were supplied with some or all of them by those ordering the work.[118]

What appears to be a Jewish retreat into seclusion is precisely that, but it also represents something altogether different: a regrouping and organizing of

[116] Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry," 15. It is unclear to what degree the Jewish position changed with the changing nature of regulation, which, though under imperial aegis, was governed at a level closer to the market forces, according to N. Oikonomides, "Commerce et production de la soie à Byzance," in *Hommes et richesses dans l'empire byzantin*, vol. I, ed. C. Morrisson and J. Lefort (Paris, 1989), 192.

[117] Sharf, "Donnolo as a Byzantine Jew," 163–4. Though reasonable, Sharf's argument grows out of his perception of the extent and limitations of Jewish integration in Byzantine society. I follow Lopez for his more specific textual analysis of the legislation. Another, parallel question arises in relation to the existence of the guilds at all, beginning in the twelfth century; see Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 52 and notes.

[118] Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry," 15–16.

human and material resources for successful engagement with a large and highly institutionalized market.

If in fact the Jews did capitalize on their exclusion from the guilds, they were able to do so on account of their common interests, long experience and underlying demographics, which extended their infrastructure over great distances and thereby encouraged trade. The connective tissue of that population, the highway that moved both trade and communal business, was the sea, as much a mechanism of trade for the Jews as it was for the region in general.[119] Here, too, the history of the Byzantine Jews at sea begins in the early Byzantine period, prior to the rise of Islam. Already Bishop Synesius (died c. 414) describes a Jewish ship and crew, and the Theodosian Code itself mentions Jewish interests in the charter of ships in regard to the payment of duties.[120] The most compelling evidence, however, comes from a constellation of sources from the middle period, when their activity through the twelfth century earned the Jews a prominent place in the burgeoning mercantile economy of the eastern Mediterranean.

Two aforementioned edicts from 960 and 992, Venetian and Byzantine respectively, exclude Jews from Venetian shipping, and complement the exclusionary clause of the *Book of the Eparch* from the beginning of the same century.[121] Two opinions about these prohibitions represent a basic gap in historical interpretation. The first approach assumes the success of such decrees, and concludes that the Jews suffered from the exclusion. The second opinion assumes that when legislators repeat a law, they betray the fact that the original law failed; according to this view, one concludes that the first law, at least, failed to rein in Jewish trade in the eastern Mediterranean.[122] The problem, if reduced to an historical approach, has no solution, since it relies on methodological assumptions that one brings to the reading of primary sources. Taken, however, in the context of Jewish shipping in subsequent centuries, especially as manifest in the sources of the Cairo Genizah, it would seem that these two decrees evidence a perceived

[119] See Goitein's section on "Travel and seafaring," in *Mediterranean Society*, I, 273–352. McCormick, "Byzantium on the Move," 3, points out how travel linked all the minorities of the empire and in some sense helped to "weave together these disparate peoples."

[120] For a characteristically brief but informative discussion of these two cases, see Linder, *Imperial Legislation*, document no. 19. On Synesius, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602* (Norman, Okla., 1964), 842–3, who brings this particular case into the realm of traditional Byzantine studies. For the role of the Jews in the purveyance of foodstuffs, see Ruggini, *Economia e società*, 230, n. 73, 311–21.

[121] Basil II, *Novellae Constitutiones*, PG 117, 616–17; S. Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia* (Venice, 1853–61), vol. I, 371, 382.

[122] Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio," 428–9, 476–80, including Ashtor's opinion that they succeeded and D. Jacoby's response. See also Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry," 7–8.

threat of competition on the part of the Venetians and Byzantines. The Venetians, who solicited the bull in the first place, feared the competition of the Jews, one of the few groups that enjoyed an international infrastructure as broad – if, admittedly, not as deep – as their own. The Byzantines were similarly content to reduce the Jews' ability to move their goods abroad, because it undermined the government's control of the textile market.[123]

That Byzantine-Jewish trade on the high seas continued in both the eleventh and twelfth centuries appears even more likely, as the Byzantine Empire increased its share of control in the Mediterranean and as literary and documentary sources forcefully indicate.[124] In his twelfth-century chronicle, Abraham ibn Da'ud recounts the tale of the four captives, in which four sages from the East end up as the victims of piracy in the Aegean, on their way to Bari.[125] The tone of the story takes for granted seafaring in the eastern Mediterranean, such that the reader would assume it to be the most natural of undertakings. Moreover, the Cairo Genizah offers a number of references to Jewish seafaring on the north–south axis between Egypt and Asia Minor, confirming the general impression given by Ibn Da'ud.[126] One Judeo-Arabic letter refers to a sea passage in which Jews traded in the Byzantine Empire, while the author describes his own business on the island of Cyprus, then also under Byzantine control.[127] Perhaps the most convincing proof of the commonplace nature of sea trade among Byzantine Jews comes from the mere fact of their repeated capture by pirates throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[128] Obviously, the fact of their capture presumes sea travel in the first place, and while any number of reasons must have motivated travel across the north–south axis, trade clearly counted among the more prominent ones, among Byzantine and North African Jews.[129]

[123] D. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice* (Cambridge, 1988), 41, points out how the bull limited the privileges accorded the Venetians to those ships that bore only their merchandise. Disallowing the merchandise of their competitors was in fact part of the purpose of the bull.

[124] On the rise of Christian states at the expense of Muslim pilgrimage over the sea, see H. S. Khalilieh, "The Legal Opinion of Maliki Jurists Regarding Andalusian Muslim Pilgrims Travelling by Sea during the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries CE," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 14/1 (1999): 60–1.

[125] Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, 46 (Heb.), 64 (Eng.); Cohen, "The Story of the Four Captives," 55–131.

[126] D. Jacoby, "Byzantine Crete," 521–3.

[127] S. D. Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders* (Princeton, 1974), 330–3 (= University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, E 16 522).

[128] Baron, *History*, IV, 326, n. 34; Mann, *Jews*, I, 87ff., 241f., 244; II, 87ff., 306f., 316f., 344f.; Mann, *Texts*, I, 136ff., 348ff., 366ff.; S. Assaf, "New Documents concerning the Proselytes and a Messianic Movement" (Heb.), *Zion* 5 (1939–40), 113ff.

[129] Gertwagen, "Geniza Letters," 90.

In the Black Sea, which housed an entire trade of its own, the Jews played a less well established role during the Middle Byzantine period, though the region would integrate itself into the larger European textile market by the thirteenth century.[130] Even before then, however, the ancient Byzantine imperial commitment to Cherson on the Crimea always brought the entire Black Sea into its sphere of influence, though often disputed and tested.[131] From the Jewish point of view, the connection is centered on the Karaites who lived on the Crimean peninsula, perhaps accounting for the establishment of other Karaite communities on the north shore of the sea and their ongoing connections to Constantinople.[132] Similarly, the importance of the Khazars in the region during the ninth and tenth centuries, together with the fact of a resident Khazar in Constantinople in the tenth century, also points to a Jewish presence in the Byzantine Black Sea.[133] Finally, the arrival of a Russian at the community of Salonica suggests a link to the Euxine as well.[134]

The twelfth-century tax on Strobilote Jews raises fascinating questions about Jewish contemporary shipping in the Mediterranean. The chrysobull of Manuel I that redirects Jewish revenue from the imperial coffers to the renovation of Hagia Sophia also refers to "an exemption of ships bearing 30,000."[135] The highly elliptical language renders a connection between the Jews and the ships difficult to establish, since the decree may simply enumerate two unrelated classes of exemption. However, these two classes may just as easily refer to Jewish shipping in the coastal town of Strobilos. This possibility relies on both the accumulated evidence of Jewish trade on the high seas, on a roughly contemporary mention of Jewish captives from that town, and on the logic of the *exkousseia*, in which a new, collective tax

[130] G. I. Brătianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la mer Noire au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: 1929), 106ff.; Jacoby, "Migration of Merchants," 536–7; Laiou, "Exchange and Trade," 728–9; N. Oikonomides, "Le kommerkarion d'Abydos, Thessalonique et le commerce bulgare au IXe siècle," in *Hommes et richesses* ed. C. Abadie-Reynal *et al.*, II, 246.

[131] Avramea, "Land and Sea Communications," 80, 83; A. Lewis, "Byzantine Light-Weight Solidi and Trade to the North Sea and Baltic," in *Studies in Language, Literature and Culture of the Middle Ages and Later*, ed. E. Atwood and A. Hill (Austin, 1969), 131–55.

[132] Ankori, *Karaites*, 152, n. 263. Ankori further claims that Karaite legislation with respect to sea voyages on the Sabbath indicates that the Karaites engaged in business at sea. Ankori (p. 173) cites: Judah b. Elijah Hadassi, *Eshkol ha-kofer* (Gozlow, 1836), 56b, Alphabet 149; 56a, Alphabet 147.

[133] Hasdai's anonymous Khazarian correspondent was living in Constantinople at the time of their exchange. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 94–121, 188–201; though not commenting on the Jewishness of the Khazars, see F. E. Wozniak, "Byzantine Policy on the Black Sea or the Russian Steppe in the Late 830's," *Byzantine Studies* 2 (1975): 56–62; Lewis, "Was Eastern Europe European?" 22.

[134] See above, chap. 4, n. 215. [135] Zepos and Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, I, 380. See above, n. 53.

burden is offset by the rescission of a previous, individual one.[136] In either case, the role of seafaring in any long-distance trade is presumed to be prominent, and the evidence regarding Byzantine Jewry, such as it is, should confirm this historical assumption. Besides, from the point of view of communications broadly construed, seafaring need not serve trade directly or explicitly in order to foster it; Jews, like everyone else, normally traveled with multiple purposes in mind.

Aside from goods, currency and people that the sea conveyed from one place to another, people themselves routinely carried letters in an informal postal network.[137] These letters served as the primary vehicle of communication over long distances, and they illustrate the great geographical breadth of the Jewish economy in Byzantium and elsewhere.[138] More specific to Byzantine Jewry, the prominence of Hebrew in these letters, as compared to Greek, Arabic and Aramaic, further renders the language itself one of the key mechanisms of trade.[139] While Hebrew and Aramaic are expected for contracts, thanks to their canonized use in legal matters, the role of the living Hebrew language becomes evident most notably in the business and personal letters, where communication of information does not rely on calcified forms of documentation. One might go so far as to maintain that Hebrew became a hallmark of the Byzantine-Jewish economy and a quiet reminder of a purely internal mechanism being put to use for economic advancement in the open markets.[140]

In some cases Jews, Muslims and Christians helped each other grease the wheels of commerce informally. Elijah, writing from Byzantium, describes how a man named Abu Eli offered to help convey Elijah's correspondence. Abu Eli urged Elijah to "give me the responses that you wrote to your brother, and I'll send them with a Christian from Amalfi, together with my letters."[141] Though the letters in question were largely religious poems and

[136] See above, n. 53. For the new reading of T-S 13 J 34.3, which identifies the origin of the captives mentioned therein as Strobilos, see below, Appendix B. Jacoby, "Byzantine Asia Minor," 90, believes it unlikely that the Strobilote captives were traveling on business.

[137] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 281–95, 301–3, for both overland and oversea networks of communication.

[138] Graboïs, "Use of Letters," 93–105; A. Scheiber, "The Letter of Meshullam ben Kalonymos ben Moshe the Elder to Constantinople Regarding the Karaites" (Heb.), in *Studies in Jewish History Presented to Professor Raphael Mahler on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Sh. Yeivin (Merhavia, 1974), 19–23.

[139] De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 22; see also de Lange, "A Thousand Years of Hebrew Study in Byzantium," 147–61; de Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks, or Romans?" 105–18; Graboïs, "Use of Letters," 102.

[140] De Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks, or Romans?," 111; above, chap. 2, n. 177.

[141] T-S 20.45, lines 24–5, ed. by J. Mann, *Texts*, I, 49. Mann dates it to the eleventh century based on paleographic analysis. I have no quarrel with his dating, though I think it difficult to pin down.

other writings of exclusively Jewish interest, the means of interreligious collaboration in travel and communication permeate intra-Jewish exchange without turbulence. In relying on a Christian merchant, the author of this letter may bolster David Abulafia's claim of Christian mercantile superiority in Norman Italy, but his letter also betrays the persistence of communications between formerly Byzantine Jewish communities and those still in Byzantine territory.[142]

Set in the Constantinople of Heraclius (but probably composed in the late eighth century), the *Liber de Miraculis* of John the Monk tells the story of a business encounter between the Christian Theodore and Abraham the Jew. Abraham proposes that Theodore "accept [my] gold, leverage it, and we shall share the profits." Theodore, however, spurns Abraham's offer. The story develops when Theodore finds himself down on his luck, at which point he applies for help to Abraham, whom he remembers from his more prosperous days. Stung by their previous dealings, Abraham reproaches the recently impoverished Theodore: "When you were rich, I frequently asked you to take my money to trade with, but you were not interested. Now that you are poor, you ask me for gold?"[143] Despite Abraham's reproach, Theodore prevails upon him, and Abraham agrees to lend him money, but he requires collateral. Theodore musters it in the form of an icon, and thereby opens the way for Abraham's ultimate conversion.

Theodore's story demands an historical approach similar to that applied to the anonymous *Doctrina Jacobi*. In both tales, many details blatantly polemicize; characteristically, both culminate in the same ending, namely, the zealous conversion of the merchant Jew. Also like the *Doctrina*, however, Theodore's story presents a plausible scenario that lends credence to its story line, especially concerning the economics of the protagonists' dealings. The story of Theodore and Abraham dramatizes the practice of the *commenda* or a similar partnership structure.[144] Significantly, neither the text nor the subtext of the original business proposition evokes moneylending; the secured loan results only from the bitterness born of their earlier failure to enter into partnership. Also notably, the Jew holds a reasonably strong position, as a well-equipped merchant looking for interesting opportunities.

[142] D. Abulafia, "Il Mezzogiorno peninsulare dai bizantini all'espulsione," in *Gli Ebrei in Italia*, ed. C. Vivanti (Turin, 1996), 13.

[143] John the Monk, *Liber de Miraculis*, ed. M. Hoferer (Würzburg, 1884), 14–16. Hoferer sets the story in the late eighth or early ninth centuries, whereas Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," 146, places it in the mid seventh century.

[144] Abulafia, "Asia, Africa and the Trade of Medieval Europe," 429, on the varieties of partnership arrangements avalailable.

Finally, the story seems to take for granted that such dealings were possible, indeed common, pointing to routine engagement between Jewish and Christians traders. On this last point, however, we cannot fail to notice that the story also expresses the limitations of such dealings; Theodore's friends will not deal with him if he relies on capital acquired from a Jew.[145] More difficult to discern is whether the power imbalance, which in this case favors the Jew, represents the ideological angle of the narrative or a plausible situation in which Jewish dealings were sufficiently organized and regulated, so as to allow Abraham to set the terms of the deal.

In the midst of these conceptual mechanisms for trade, the *fondaco* or *funduq* was a physical space that offered services to all types of merchants, ranging from lodging to international trade regulation and warehouses. By the twelfth century this institution, generally referred to in its Italian form of *fondaco*, served individual European communities on Muslim soil. Benjamin describes Alexandria as a "city bustling with commerce, and each nation has a *punduq* belonging to it."[146] Olivia Remie Constable, in her authoritative study of the medieval *fondaco*, dubs these outposts "colonies before colonialism," since they served the mercantile needs of their nationals, even though these colonies had not yet begun to project political or military power over the host countries.[147] This characterization as a national outpost begs the question: Did the Jews have a *fondaco* or something similar? In the tenth and eleventh centuries, when the *funduq* in Muslim lands provided services at large, the Jews are documented as having made use of them.[148] In twelfth-century Christendom, however, when merchants established commercial outposts under the flag of their realm or city, the Jews apparently relied on their own, internal networks for lodging and depositories. In Constantinople, which had a cognate institution called the *mitaton*, the Jews also had their own, unofficial infrastructure. That is, under Islam their legal status was that of the *dhimmi*, but in Byzantium it was that of Jew. As such, their status as a local minority may have applied even to foreign Jews, regardless of the nationality of those Jews and regardless of any treaties that may have governed Christian foreigners of that same nationality.[149] Only in later centuries did Jews function as Venetian nationals, for example. And even that status emerged with any clarity only thanks to the settlement of a dispute between Andronicus II and Venice, regarding Constantinopolitan Jews who claimed Venetian nationality.[150]

[145] Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," 146. [146] Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, sec. 106, p. 69 (Heb.).
[147] Constable, *Housing the Stranger*, 111. [148] Ibid., 68.
[149] Ibid., 115. [150] D. Jacoby, "Venice and the Venetian Jews," 36, 38–9.

PRIMARY MARKETS

Built on the same structures that upheld their internal economy, the Jews' stake in the economy of national and international scale relied on traditional, well-worn paths of communication and mutual assent to canonical norms of law and custom. The materials produced and transported, however, were subject to larger forces of supply and demand, within which the Jews successfully worked but over which they had no widespread influence (excepting, perhaps, in local pockets). In terms of production, Jewish preeminence in the textile and leather industries of certain Byzantine towns attracted the attention of non-Jewish and Jewish observers more than once, as they describe the specifically Jewish nature of these pockets of manufacturing.[151] In terms of sale, the transportation of these products among fellow Jews from Byzantium and abroad, and thence into the marketplace, owed its success to the application of the existing social and religious infrastructure in commerce. Situated thus, no product appears more explicitly linked to both Jewish production and trade than silks, with hides occupying a secondary, but still noteworthy, place. In both cases, the references to Jewish production and trade – even to Jewish preeminence in certain places – leaves little room for doubt that, though functioning as Jews, they were also fixtures in the Byzantine markets.[152] In all cases, the Jews' successes, such as they are presented by the sources, took root in markets and under legislation outside of the Jewish realm, and therefore they contextualize the Jews' participation within the larger Byzantine and Mediterranean economies.

The story of Jewish silk and other textiles begins in the fourth century and continues through the middle period and beyond.[153] A precious and, until Justinian, exclusively imported commodity, silk was subject to extreme – if ultimately unenforceable – controls. It almost bore the value of currency in many respects; it constituted part of the royal treasury, was frequently offered as gift of state and was subject to taxation in kind.[154] Early on in the Christian Empire, the Jews demonstrated an interest in silk

[151] Not just in Greece and Asia Minor, but also in Italy: Abulafia, "Italian Other," 230.

[152] Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry," 3, 7–11; Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," 151–4.

[153] Later contributions of the Jews in the textile business continued to the modern period, see S. Avitsur, "The Woolen Textile Industry in Saloniki," and A. Shohat, "'The King's Clothing' in Saloniki," both in *Sefunot*, 12 (1978), 145–88.

[154] Starr, *JBE*, 17; Jacoby, "Benjamin of Tudela," 184; I. Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1896), 219: "The Jewish tax in Southern Europe was sometimes called 'Tignta Judaeorum' [perhaps 'tingta'?] as it was levied as an impost on dyed goods." Abrahams cites M. Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der abenländischen Juden* (Vienna,

production; in the year 339 Emperor Constantine II discovered that many of the indentured women of his imperial weavery had married Jews, presumably converting to Judaism themselves and revealing a rather bold strategy among the Jews of the day.[155] Later, in the sixth century, testament to at least one Jewish dyer hails from then-Byzantine Egypt. The "lease of a shop situated in the southern agora of Aninoopolis … to a Jew named Peret who intended to turn the place into a dye-works" depicts both the geographical breadth of the industry among the Jews, and it implies diversity in markets, namely, production not restricted to the high-end market of the capital.[156]

The history of the following centuries confirms and expands this ongoing investment in textiles, with particular emphasis on the weaving, dyeing and sale of silk and finished garments.[157] This overwhelming consistency over the centuries marks the depth and breadth of the Jewish investment, and the sources represent it commensurately. Some time between the eighth and

1880–8), vol. II, 69, 312, in which he also cites and briefly quotes from the *Codice diplomatico del regno di Carlo I e II d'Angiò* (Naples, 1863), vol. I, 314, according to which Jewish dye works existed in Trani and Benevento.

[155] Linder, *Imperial Legislation*, 144–50, esp. n. 8, makes a compelling, albeit extremely cursory, case for understanding the relationship between the Jews and the weavers to be much more than intermarriage. Clearly the Jews focused on the imperial weaving institution as a means to further their economic goals. Most remarkably, the law never demands that the women return to Christianity, but simply orders that others not follow their example in the future. On the economic motives of the Jews, see also Avi-Yonah, *The Jews*, 175.

[156] Tcherikover et al., *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, III, 99–101, no. 511. In his notes to this document, Tcherikover ponders precisely this question: "Jewish dyers do not appear to be referred to in other papyri, but it is noteworthy that non-papyrological sources testify to the interest displayed by the Jews in the dyeing industry."

The global implications of the phenomenon of the Jews in the textile business is well documented. See Gil, *A History of Palestine*, 229–31, on the Jews as textile workers in Palestine in the Islamic period; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 101–8, for similar conclusions in Egypt; for the eastern coast of Spain, see M. D. Meyerson, "The Economic Life of the Jews of Murviedro," in *In Iberia and Beyond*, ed. B. D. Cooperman (Newark, London and Toronto, 1998), n. 81, referring to ARV:B 1153:662v from the Archivo Real de Valencia describing Jews in various occupations, particularly the textile industry; Jews in Gaeta, close to the former border of Byzantine Italy, were dyers according to *Codex Diplomaticus Cajetanus* (Monte Cassino, 1891), vol. II, no. 377 (from the year 1129).

The sixth-century geographer Cosmas Indicopleustes mentions the prominence of the Jews in the "arts" of dyeing and construction, in the Biblical context of the building of the Tabernacle. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. and Fr. trans. W. Wolska-Conus, 3 vols. (Paris, 1968–73), vol. I, 510–11, no. 70 (= *Christiana Topographia*, PG 88, III, 180, cols. 171–2); Baron, *History*, IV, 168–9, 319–20, n. 20; S. D. Goitein, "Petitions to the Fatimid Caliphs from the Cairo Genizah," *JQR*, NS 45 (1958), 32f.; J. Starr, "The Epitaph of a Dyer in Corinth," *Byzantinisch-neugriechischen Jahrbücher* 12 (1936): 42–9; Gottheil and Worrell, *Fragments*, 152f.

[157] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 223. Although speaking primarily of the Islamic world of the Genizah, Goitein nonetheless effectively sums up the economic role of silk in the Mediterranean world. He explains how "everyone, in addition to his substantial business, dabbled in silk. It was a matter of capital investment rather than of commerce." He continues, "the enormous popularity of dealings in silk and the subsequent profusion of the references to them hamper the efforts to bring the entire material under control." On the Jews' participation in multiple aspects of silk manufacture, see Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 486.

tenth centuries there lived in Corinth "Eliaqim b. Eliaqim the dyer."[158] Tenth-century Jews in Sparta polished wool, according to the *Life of Saint Nikon*, as well as indications of silk cultivation in Lucania.[159] Later, the eleventh-century Biblical commentator Jacob b. Reuben discusses the rules pertaining to the weaving and dyeing of wool and silk in relation to the sections of the Bible which touch on related issues.[160] Surely Jacob's comment on *sha'atnez*, in which he expressly describes both the manufacture and sale of textiles, justifies the inference that his readership worked in or around precisely those professions referred to in the commentary.[161] In the subsequent century, Roger II raided southern Greece and transplanted the local Jews of Corinth and Morea to Sicily, perhaps establishing the silk industry there on the strength of their labor and expertise.[162] In roughly the same period, a Jewish silk weaver was forced to flee from Byzantium to Old Cairo, in order to escape the charge of having spoiled silk. And contemporary place names on the island of Andros, prominent in the twelfth century for silk stuffs, may indicate Jewish silk manufacture there.[163]

[158] Starr, *JBE*, 148; Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 455, appropriately questions the date, which is difficult to pin down. He also questions the associations to silk, pointing out that he may have been a dyer of other stuffs.

[159] Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon*, 112–13. Oria, the center of Jewish learning and home of Shabbetai Donnolo, was considered an important textile center in the tenth century; see Gay, *L'Italie méridoniale, et l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 1904), and A. Guillou, "Production and Profits in the Byzantine Province of Italy (Tenth to Eleventh Centuries): An Expanding Society," *DOP* 28(1974): 94–5.

[160] Ankori, *Karaites*, 174, nn. 21–2, citing Jacob ben Reuben, *Sefer ha-osher*, on Ex. 25:4 (which deals with the dyed threads which were contributed for building of the Tabernacle) and Lev. 11:32 (dealing with the impure animals, contact with which can contaminate clothes, among other things). On Jacob b. Reuben, see Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 475.

[161] See above, n. 111.

[162] Krauss, *Studien*, 73; Starr, *JBE*, 223, does not support Krauss in his conclusion about the ongoing dominance of the Jews in the Sicilian silk business. However, if Krauss is correct, then it certainly affects our understanding of the Sicily trade as represented in the Cairo Genizah in subsequent years. Guillou, "Production and Profits in the Byzantine Province of Italy," 95, imagines the Jews in Oria as silk dyers as early as the tenth century.

The subsequent debate as to the continued preeminence of the Jews in the island's silk industry stands apart from the simple fact of their original importance and inspiration to the invading ruler. Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 463–4, points out that Sicily already had a silk industry, prior to Roger's importation of Jewish talent. Also linked with southern Italy is the case of Oria, already known as a the ancestral home of the Ahima'az clan, whose chronicle emerges from and comments on the Byzantine-Jewish culture there. In evidence unrelated to the Jews, but interesting for its circumstantial comment on the role of textiles in the region, Gay points out the city's renown for the quality of its textiles; see Gay, *L'Italie méridionale*, 207, and Baron *et al.*, *Economic History*, 39; Jacoby, "Silk Crosses the Mediterranean," in *Le vie del Mediterraneo: idée, uomini, oggetti (secolo XI–XVI)*, ed. G. Airaldi (Genoa, 1997), 66–7.

[163] Or. 1081 J 9. See Muthesius "The Hidden Element," 21; Muthesius, "Essential Processes," 166; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 50; and Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 461, 482, n. 169, who disagrees with Muthesius, the latter thinking that the worker was an imperial employee.

The most famous of all the accounts, and certainly among the most compelling, the *Itinerary* of Benjamin of Tudela testifies to Jews in the textile industry in the second half of the twelfth century. He specifically notes the cities of Thebes and Constantinople as centers for Jewish silk and extremely valuable purple garments.[164] Approaching the end of the period prior to the Fourth Crusade, Benjamin's account impresses for its directness and for the continuity which it proves, in connection with the evidence of the previous centuries. Jewish commitment to textiles further stands out, in light of the fact that Benjamin referred to the Theban community as "the most gifted tailors of silk and purple garments in Greece," even *after* Roger II relocated many Jews to Sicily.[165] Not only tailors, the Jews of Salonica wove silk, too, though perhaps they did not prosper from it as much, since Benjamin vaguely states that they suffered "the weight of exile," paralleling problems encountered in contemporary Chonai related to the Jews in their role as tanners.[166] Taken as a whole, the collected evidence leaves little doubt that, at the level of production, the Jews of Byzantium loomed disproportionately large, not only within the Byzantine silk industry but more broadly in that of the eastern Mediterranean.[167]

Just as the Jews manufactured textiles, so too did they prominently prepare and sell hides. Unfortunately, the process by which the hides of animals became fit for human use entailed, then as now, the application of noxious chemicals, which notoriously pollute the water and air. Thus, the profession of tanning generated great resentment, and in some measure reflected badly on the Jews in both practical and cultural terms. Despite the disparaging tone of the Christian – and even Jewish – references to tanning, they reflect the obvious contribution of the Jews to the Byzantine

[164] Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, secs. 16, 23. For a Christian account, roughly contemporary with Benjamin, which makes the same point, but in a negative light, see Starr, *JBE*, 225, and n. 173 below. Jacoby points out the presence of Jewish purple fishers in Alexandria, and infers a connection to the Theban Jewish purple dyers, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 493.

[165] Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 468, 486–7, goes so far as to imply that Jews migrated there in order to replace those Jews who ended up in Sicily. The overlap between the Venetian interest in Theban silk and the Jewish one further supports the argument that the expansion of the two economies was linked; see Jacoby, "Italian Privileges," 352, 363.

[166] Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, secs. 18–19: ושם הגלות על היהודים, translated by E. N. Adler as: "The Jews are oppressed."

[167] The most compelling and cogent argument for continuity of Jewish production, especially in the capital, where explicit evidence skips centuries, is that of Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry." Ankori, *Encounter*, 31–2, argues that despite the Jewish work in textiles "you will not hear from any Byzantine chronicle or polemic from this period either the claim, or whisper of a claim, about any Jewish 'dominance' of crafts akin to the claims, murmurings and libels bandied about the Jewish financial and commercial sector in the Western Christian sphere." I think that the evidence does point to a Jewish disproportionality in some sectors, especially in particular locales.

economy.[168] A ninth-century comment relates to the Jewish association with the profession in polemical but telling terms. Gregory of Nicaea understands the very nature of Jewishness as "contact with dog's excrement and the multifarious vomit associated with tanning."[169] A later, tenth-century archeological site on the island of Crete may be a Jewish tanning compound from the Muslim and subsequent, Byzantine periods.[170] Yet later, the eleventh-century Karaite exegete Jacob b. Reuben addresses the question of the tanning of hides of non-kosher animals. He details the problem in light of Leviticus 11:8, which declares of non-kosher animals: "Their carcasses you shall not touch." Jacob points out the unsatisfactory position of his opponents, the Rabbanites, who argue that

> the carcass is defined as that which comprises the hide and the flesh and the bones. I [Jacob] was much surprised by this [assertion]. Do [the Rabbanites] claim that if the hide is separated [from the flesh and bones], then it is no longer [legally defined as] "carcass"? … Now, the Rabbis said that the dyeing process removes the impurity [of the impure animal's hide], because tanning purifies the hides of carcasses. In fact, this is hardly a proper conclusion for these matters; know that it is impossible for the dyeing process to purify in any manner whatsoever.[171]

Like so many of the sources for Byzantine Jewry, this polemic comes to economic history by way of internal Jewish debates regarding essentially legal matters. To be sure, the case under examination need not prove that the Jews engaged in the tanning itself – it could just as easily refer to Jewish use of these hides as consumers. Nevertheless, contemporary evidence frames examples like this one that, in and of themselves, are not decisive, whereas together, they leave little doubt that the Jews were heavily invested in the production of leather goods.

As in previous centuries, both Jewish and Christian texts continue to describe the Jews as prominent tanners in the twelfth century. Benjamin of Tudela refers to the Jews of Constantinople, against whom "there is much hatred … which is fostered by the tanners, who throw out their dirty water in the streets before the doors of the Jewish homes, and defile the Jews'

[168] On pollution, see J B. Batra, chap. 2:8; on the negative associations of the profession, see Qid. 82b and B. Batra 16b: "The world cannot function without spice-sellers and tanners, but happy are the spice-sellers and miserable are the tanners." Cf. Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 55–6.

[169] Dagron, "Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée," 319; Dölger, "Judensteuer," 10; cf. the comparable description by Gregory Asbestas, excerpted and trans. in Starr, *JBE*, 137–8.

[170] For an examination of the concept of the Jews' being forced into the role of tanners, see Dölger, "Judensteuer," 10; Ankori, "Jews and the Jewish Community in Mediaeval Crete," 351–2.

[171] Jacob b. Asher, *Sefer ha-osher* on Lev. 11:8 in Ankori, *Karaites*, 177, n. 30; cf. Daniel al-Kumisi, in a fragment published by S. Poznański, "Karaite Miscellanies," *JQR* 8 (1895–6): 682–4.

quarter."[172] Michael Choniates echoes this sentiment, in calling the Jews "leather-gnawing dogs … tanners and dyers of old clothes."[173] The nature of tanning, together with the vitriolic ideological metaphors to which it lends itself, might skew the picture of Jewish activity, except for the fact that the Jewish testimonies themselves, such as that of Benjamin, confirm the Jews' prominence. Clearly, the Jews occupied, in the urban centers at least, a disproportionate share of the tanning industry, for better and for worse.[174]

In both tanning and textiles, the Jews did not limit themselves to production; rather, they pursued the economic chain of the silk and leather industries down to their sale as well. Following on the Byzantine Egyptian Peret and his dye works, the Christian anti-Jewish polemic *Doctrina Jacobi* describes a Jew, Jacob, who sold textiles on the north–south trade route between modern-day Tunisia and Constantinople.[175] The story, set immediately prior to the Muslim sweep of North Africa in the mid seventh century, offers not so much a specific historical case as a viable cultural picture of the time, in which the tone of the text and its polemical purpose even suggest that the Jewish textile dealer was a stereotype.[176] That such a stereotype sprang from a seed of truth is indicated by the diachronic and geographically broad regularity of the reports about Jewish textile trade.

Particularly for the ninth and tenth centuries, two populations at the margins of the Byzantine-Jewish experience have inspired weighty speculation about such commerce. The first, the kingdom of the Khazars, bordered both the Caspian and Black Seas and was well known for its gradual conversion to Judaism in the eighth and ninth centuries, when it played a prominent role in regional trade. The famously informative *De Administrando Imperio* by Constantine Porphyrogenitus describes this trade region, which includes the Khazars and especially their important military and commercial links

[172] Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, 14 (Eng.), 16 (Heb.); on Ankori's theory of the Jewish role in a tanners' guild and the Pera settlement as a reflection of that association, see *Karaites*, 176. I agree with Jacoby, "Les quartiers juifs," 181–2, who does not associate the quarter with any profession but rather with the ethnic-religious categorization of the Jews.

[173] S. P. Lampros, ed., "Eulogy for Niketas of Chonai," in *Michael Akominatou tou Choniatou ta Sozomena*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1879), vol. I, 53; excerpted and trans. in Starr, *JBE*, 225. P. Magdalino, "Enlightenment," 368.

[174] Ankori, *Karaites*, 141, for the exaggeration of the odium as related by Benjamin of Tudela.

[175] Baron, *History*, IV, 323, n. 27; *Doctrina*, 217; Laiou, "Exchange and Trade," 703; Avramea, "Land and Sea Communications," 83–4.

[176] For the current polemics on the *Doctrina* and its implications for the political and social history of the early seventh century, see above, chap. 2, n. 32. Dagron, "Urban Economy," points out the economic hierarchy depicted in the *Doctrina*; one point of interest is the role of a Jew in business with a non-Jew, although there is always the danger that the figure of Jacob is merely a straw man, set up as a stereotypically perfidious character.

to the empire.[177] More specific to the question at hand, the northern Caucasus, that is, the southern reaches of Khazaria, developed an interest in silk as early as the eighth century, at which point the region began to produce silks and to trade in them, significantly, with Constantinople.[178] One can do no more than assume that the semi-nomadic Khazarian Jews might have pursued a relationship with Byzantine Jewry, or vice versa, but these commercial interests, as well as a Hebrew letter of an ethnic Khazar living in Constantinople in the tenth century, provide some basis for such assumptions.[179] Meanwhile, a parallel argument follows the northern route of the Radhanite silk trade to Byzantium.[180] As with the Khazars, these itinerant Jewish merchants are presumed to have had some favorable orientation towards their coreligionists, trading in the orbit not only of Byzantium but, also more specifically, of Byzantine Jewry.[181] Admittedly, the sources tantalize more than they reveal about Byzantine-Jewish, Khazarian and Radhanite silk traffic in the Black Sea region. But the reasoned inference of a connection among them may appropriately contextualize the specific and relatively early ban of the *Book of the Eparch* on Jewish raw silk exportation, by instantiating vigorous Jewish competition in the northern silk trade.[182]

More explicit evidence from the Cairo Genizah, crucial for the period of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, supports the general impression from previous centuries.[183] Two letters discuss not only Byzantine-Jewish silk trading but, more specifically, the international aspect of that trade. Moses b. Jacob requests, in a letter from Jerusalem, seven *ratls* of fine colored silk made in Constantinople.[184] A similarly suggestive letter from Ramleh refers to silk bought in Cyprus. The author complains that, "When I arrived in Ramleh, I had to pay customs to a degree I am unable to describe. The price in Ramleh of the Cyprus silk, which I carry with me, is 2 dinars per little

[177] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik and trans. R. J. H. Jenkins (Washington, D.C., 1967), 53, 56–65; Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," 138–9.

[178] Dimitroukas, *Reisen*, 166–7; T. Noonan, "The Khazar Economy," *Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi* 9 (1997): 281–3.

[179] Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 94–121, 188–201. Thomas, "Râdhânites," 6–15. See also a reference to ninth-century Jews in the Crimea in Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, I, 357.

[180] Heyd, *Histoire*, 127. Thomas, "Râdhânites," 22–5, sees the crux of the matter in the convergence of these parallel lines, and the role of the Jews in the northern silk route.

[181] Ibn Khordadhbeh, *The Book of Ways and Kingdoms*, excerpted and trans. by E. N. Adler, *Jewish Travellers* (London, 1930), 2–3; see below, chap. 5 n. 66. On the presumed connection to fellow Jews, see Thomas, "Râdhânites," 16.

[182] See above, n. 114.

[183] More circumstantial evidence: Goitein, "A Letter of Historical Importance," 522, n. 8, mentions Seleucia as a capital of cotton export, and clearly a Jewish center as well.

[184] T-S 13 J 6 f. 22 in Gil, *The Land of Israel*, I, 244, III, 104–7, no. 460v, ll. 16–18.

[Egyptian] pound."[185] A third letter regarding the sale of hides from the island of Crete to Cairo provides a comparable case, this time of Byzantine Jews in the international sale of leather.[186] Finally, a letter describing the near-sinking of a merchant ship refers to a "great quantity of linen," which got wet in the leaking boat.[187] Complementing the evidence of the Jews' outstanding position in the Byzantine silk industry, these cases bring that industry into the context of regional commerce.

No single reason can explain the depth and breadth of the Jewish investment in textiles and leather, but at least three sets of reasons help to do so. First and foremost, longstanding history and expertise positioned the Jews well and provided natural and trans-generational avenues for investment. Secondly, at an objective, economic and demographic level, the long chain of textile production and sale took place largely in the urban setting, and the compact and durable finished product traveled well. Thirdly, the Jews bridged the gap between production and consumption, since they, like their fellow subjects, constantly required clothes, coverings, leathers and the like.[188] Two *ketubbot*, from Seleucia and Mastaura respectively, list textiles as part of their dowries. The terms of the Seleucian *ketubbah* are preserved only as part of a personal letter; the author refers to an expensive dowry, including two silk cloaks and a buttoned shawl of silk.[189] The Mastauran *ketubbah* describes a number of different types of textiles, such as a scarf, a coat and other specifically feminine garments, indicating their monetary value between one and two gold pieces.[190] Though other cases, such as the purchase of Cypriot silk cited above, deal with purchase in the context of trade, these marriage contracts shed all-too-rare light on economics in the etymological sense, at the level of the household. Jews, like everyone else, went to markets, bought common goods and simply engaged in life in the larger context of the Byzantine city. The ubiquity and value of textiles, however, led to their commoditization, and therefore blurred the line between home consumption and wider commerce. Furthermore,

[185] Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, 47 (= T-S 8 J 19, f. 27).

[186] De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 22.

[187] T-S 12.241, ll. 4–11, translated by Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 321. D. Jacoby, "Byzantine Trade with Egypt from the Mid-Tenth Century to the Fourth Crusade," *Thesaurismata* 30 (2000): 39, argues that the author comes from Byzantium on account of his use of the Greek word for "pumps" (used to keep the water out of the ship, which arrived safely).

[188] For the demand for Byzantine and other silks among Jews in the Muslim world, see S. Assaf, "Old Genizah Documents," 26–7; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 46, nn. 30–1; Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 183.

[189] T-S 13 J 21 in Goitein, "A Letter of Historial Importance," 523, n. 15; 529, commentary, ll. 11–15.

[190] The total value of the marriage contract is 35⅓ gold pieces. See: Mann, *Jews*, II, 94, ll. 18ff.; de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 1–10; Friedman, *Marriage*, I, 44.

textiles retained their value and functioned something like currency, a fact poignantly illustrated in the frantic fundraising of the Alexandria community, as it attempted to ransom captives from Strobilos. Forced to pay the extortionary amount of 100 gold pieces, the leaders "took a collection for our purpose, from men, women, boys and girls, in gold, silver, copper, flax, both raw and spun, and pillows and other things."[191] In sum, in the dynamic and important textile economy, Jews straddled both supply and demand, internal and external markets, and production and sale. Consequently, they found themselves immersed and disproportionately prominent in the heart of the empire's urban and international economy.

SECONDARY MARKETS

Working from an assumption of incompleteness in the record, we may take it for granted that the Jews engaged in other fields outside the dominant ones of textiles and tanning, even accounting for the fact that Byzantine law excluded the Jews from civil and military service, the major sectors of the Byzantine economy. For example, the Jews undoubtedly farmed land, though two realities relegate Jewish agriculture, perforce, to a secondary level of importance. First from the perspective of the Byzantine economy at large, Jewish agriculture made no impression whatsoever; even if every Jewish family owned and tilled their own land, such were their numbers that they would have made no appreciable mark in the vast and overwhelmingly agricultural economy of Byzantium.[192] Second, from the Jewish perspective, Jewish preference for the larger towns and cities preempted a large-scale commitment to farming, even though Jewish viniculture and some urban or semi-urban farming clearly took place.[193]

Some evidence points to the possibility of Jewish cultivation and real-estate ownership. Byzantine Egypt, the bread basket of the empire, provides an early testament to the Jewish ownership of land on the eve of the Muslim Conquest. A papyrus describes a sale of land by Enoch the Jew, and another

[191] T-S 13 J 34.3; see text below, Appendix A.

[192] For a concise exposition of the role of agriculture in the economy and military across Byzantine history, see S. Katz, "Some Aspects of the Economic Life in the Byzantine Empire," *Pacific Historical Review* 7 (1938), 33–4.

[193] Dagron, "The Urban Economy," 394; Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 117–18; Ankori, *Karaites*, 178–81, brings important evidence from Judah b. Elijah Hadassi, *Eshkol ha-kofer*, Alphabet 149, according to which it is forbidden to "be partners with Christians in the process of milling, [or the use of] either our horses, oxen or any of our beasts of burden, in order to gain a profit on our sanctified days," when work and profit are prohibited, such as the Sabbath.

merely mentions Jews and land in the same phrase, implying a similar sale.[194] Ownership of land does not, in and of itself, prove agriculture, but the circumstances of Jewish viniculture and land ownership render agriculture plausible. Firmer confirmation comes from Byzantine Italy, around the tenth century, in a passage from the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* that refers obliquely to agricultural life there. Even more directly, Benjamin of Tudela remarks on the Jews of Crissa as farmers.[195]

From the non-agricultural point of view, the basic question of Jewish real-estate ownership poses no problem, a priori, in the Byzantine Empire.[196] The hallmark of Jewish settlement in the empire was gravitation towards the towns and cities, and every indication points to the fact that the Jews commonly owned their urban residences in addition to rental properties – though whether or not they owned the land on which these buildings stood remains a matter for speculation.[197] The *ketubbah* from Mastaura quite plainly distributes ownership of a building's "lower story, and its exit and entrance."[198] Also in the eleventh century, the pretender John Bryennios attacked the capital, and burnt down many buildings, "especially the Jewish ones," perhaps implying ownership.[199] Later in the eleventh century, as the First Crusade sent shockwaves among the Jews of Salonica, they were encouraged to give up their "homes and property."[200]

More explicitly, two Hebrew legal sources from the twelfth century attest Jewish ownership of their houses in the Byzantine Empire, though the orientation of each reflects their vastly different perspectives. Eliezer b. Nathan of Mainz released Jews in the Diaspora from prohibition against the transfer of real estate to gentiles. In this responsum, however, he releases

[194] Tcherikover, et al., *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 98–9, nos. 509–10.

[195] The passage describes the arrival of "the men of the villages who came in wagons to the city." See: Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 67; Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 69; Starr, *JBE*, 27–8; Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, 10 (Eng.), 12 (Heb.); Baron, *History*, IV, 153.

[196] See Ankori, *Karaites*, 178–80.

[197] Sharf, "Donnolo," 163–4. Although there is no reason to doubt ownership, it is never explicit, and one must keep in mind the possibility of *possessorship*. In such an arrangement, the owner might receive rents for use of land or a building, but the possessor had the right to invest in improvements, to sublet and to profit from the lease. The most notable example is Renaissance Venice, where the Jews of the Ghetto never owned the land or buildings in which they lived, but they nonetheless enjoyed the fullest rights of possessorship. The Hebrew word *hazaqah*, which embodies the principle of possessorship, entered Italian as *gazagà* precisely due to this arrangement; see D. Calabi, U. Camerino and E. Concina, *La città degli Ebrei* (Venice, 1991), 43–81.

[198] De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 6–7; Starr, *JBE*, 187–8; Mann, *Jews*, II, 94–6.

[199] Michael Attaleiates, *History*, ed. I. Bekker and W. Brunet de Presle, CSHB 50 (Bonn, 1853), 252; Starr, *JBE*, 202.

[200] Mann, "The Messianic Movements during the First Crusades," 253–9; Sharf, "An Unknown Messiah," 138–9; Starr, *JBE*, 205.

only Jews of Western Christendom, while he upholds the stricture on the Jews who live in the Orthodox East, where the Christians are supposed to be "fanatics [who] place [icons] on the gates, doors and all over their houses."[201] In quite a different tone, the local Karaite leader Judah Hadassi presumes ownership, as he addresses a different problem; he decrees: "It is forbidden that we profit from rent, be they rents of our buildings, our houses, our baths or our stores," on the Sabbath.[202] In each case, the nature of Jewish integration and segregation plays itself out in the fascinating complexity of the respective authors' assumptions. On the one hand, Eliezer b. Nathan and Judah Hadassi imagine a different cultural ideal at play. Eliezer, a non-Byzantine, seeks to preempt the intersection of two rival religious communities: Jewish and Orthodox Christian (which he views as idolatrous). Meanwhile, the preeminent Karaite authority of Byzantium addresses the religious ideal of not dealing in money on the Sabbath. On the other hand, the two rabbis seem to share an assumption that Jews routinely owned and profited from their residences (and, in the case of Hadassi, their places of business), in dealings with Byzantine Christians. In these two rabbinic postures, therefore, we find Jewish internal authority both encouraging (through regulation) economic integration and limiting it.

Similarly secondary, medicine and allied fields, such as pharmacology and, by extension, the spice trade, also figure in the economic life of the Jews as points of contact between the local communities and wider markets.[203] In other cultures, some Jews stood out for their professional role as doctors, most famously, the great Spaniards Maimonides and Hasdai ibn Shaprut. The vocation seems to have been associated with Jews in Byzantium as well, where a small number of prominent doctors are known to have practiced.[204] In terms of understanding medicine from the economic point of view, one need not rely simply on the fact that medicine is a profession and therefore of economic interest, though this is the case. Additionally, medicine's reach extends to the realm of pharmaceuticals, creating a natural bridge between medicine and the spice trade, which also attracted Jews independently of medical considerations.[205]

[201] Baron, *History*, IV, 158; Eliezer b. Nathan, *Sefer Raban*, 132, n. 291.

[202] Ankori, *Karaites*, 179, n. 40, excerpting Judah b. Elijah Hadassi, *Eshkol ha-Kofer*, 55c, Alphabet 146, here translated.

[203] A. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo* (New York, 1976), 3.

[204] See the brief discussion in Juster, *Juifs dans l'empire romain*, II, 254–5.

[205] The early period of Byzantine history leaves some clues as to the potential role of Jews in the spice trade as early as the sixth century. The island of Jotabe was both a Jewish center and an important stop on the way to India; for the presence of the Jews there, see Procopius, *Persian Wars*, ed.

The Church, as early as the Second Nicaean Council, had attempted to discourage Christians from consulting Jewish doctors – a point of ideology honored largely in the breach.[206] Nonetheless, this early censure of Jewish medicine either reflected or engendered an enduring cultural resistance in some pious quarters. In the tenth century, the well-known scholar and doctor Shabbetai Donnolo was able to establish a reputation among Jews and non-Jews alike.[207] Still, Donnolo's colleague, the monk Nilos of Rossano, refused Donnolo's treatment on the grounds of the latter's Jewish faith.[208] On the other hand, Benjamin of Tudela, ever informative, relates the privileges granted to Solomon the Egyptian, the doctor to the Emperor Manuel I; due to his position, Solomon was allowed, alone among the Jews, to ride a horse in the capital.[209]

Of course, Jewish doctors also appear in the record without reference to Christians at all. Dating from perhaps as late as the eighth century, a bilingual Venosan catacomb memorializes "Faustinos, the elder, the community doctor, the son of Isaiah."[210] Another doctor from Bari, Abraham Ben-Sasson, is recalled as the hero of a letter to Hasdai ibn Shaprut.[211] Among the numerous examples of Jewish captives during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, an anonymous Byzantine doctor appeared among one group redeemed by the Alexandrine community.[212]

Of medicinal spices, the above-mentioned, anonymous Seleucian doctor writes of the "lack of security," that prevents him from sending spices overseas, with the implication that such shipments would otherwise occur regularly.[213] The doctor may or may not owe his alleged wealth to the trade in these spices, since he makes no remarks about selling them for profit.[214]

G. Wirth (Leipzig, 2001) 1: 19, 3–5. So, too, the independent Jewish Himyar Republic in Aden during the same period, ibid., I, 20; J. Guidi, "La lettera di Simeone vescovo di Bêth Arsâm sopra i martiri omeriti," in *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, series 3, vol. VII (Rome, 1881), 471–515.

[206] Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 68; Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum*, II, col. 945e.

[207] A. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 114–15.

[208] Donnolo's interaction with St. Nilos in southern Italy touched on medical issues; see *Vita S. Nili*, ed. G. Giovanelli (Badi di Grottaferrata, 1966), 66–7, and Starr, *JBE*, 162.

[209] Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, 16–17.

[210] Ascoli, *Iscrizioni*, 287: ὧδε κεῖται φαυστίνος γερουσιάρχων ἀρχιατρός ὑιός τοῦ Ἰσάς ἔτων … שלום שלום. For a survey of evidence regarding Jewish doctors in Byzantium, see Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, 107–17.

[211] Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 89; Mann, *Texts*, I, 26, n. 28.

[212] See above, chap. 2, n. 199.

[213] T-S 13 J 21 in Goitein, "A Letter of Historial Importance," 525, 530–1; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 22; for the Seleucian doctor, see above, chap. 2, n. 144.

[214] Goitein, "A Letter of Historical Importance," 523; Starr, *Romania*, 17–19. On the incidental encounter of spice trade and Byzantium, see Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, 42–5 (= T-S 8 Ja 1, f. 5); A. O. Citarella, "Scambi commerciali fra l'Egitto e Amalfi in un documento inedito della Geniza di Cairo," *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane* 10 (1970): 3–11.

Shabbetai Donnolo himself contributed significantly to the understanding of medicinal herbs and their uses, in his pharmacological work, *Sefer ha-mirkahot*, or *Sefer ha-yaqar*, in which he compares herbs from various regions, implying a lively exchange in the same.[215]

The Radhanites, the most famous Jewish traders of the early Middle Ages, dealt in spices, bringing them overland from the Far East to the Mediterranean. Ibn Khordadhbeh, who describes these itinerant Jewish traders, makes two points of relevance to the Byzantine-Jewish spice trade. First, some of the Radhanites made regular stops in Constantinople; second, they brought with them "aloes, camphor, cinnamon, and other products of the eastern countries."[216] Whether or not the Byzantine Jews enjoyed a greater share in this trade because of their common religion with the Radhanites, Ibn Khordadhbeh does not relate, but one is hard pressed to imagine that the Radhanites did not deal with local Jews throughout their itinerary. In the end, the nagging paucity of sources in regard to these pursuits, in contrast to the comparative wealth and consistency of the same for textiles and tanning, indicates that agriculture, medicine and the spice trade colored only the edges of the economy for the Jews of Byzantium.

CONTRIBUTION AND COMPETITION, INTEGRATION AND SEGREGATION

In terms of Byzantine history, only the broadest possible conception of the economy would group taxation with the textile industry. Though inevitably related by government regulation, and though the government clearly taxed the textile industry, the two concerns represented different sectors of society and government, with different institutions, ends and means. From the point of view of Jewish history, however, taxation and textiles share the crucial quality of bridging the gap between the minority and its ambient society – a gap between a dominant system and a largely independent, though subject, one. That bridge, perhaps precisely for the distance it must cover, seems all the more remarkable for its longevity and frequency of use. Through their payment of taxes and their production and sale of textiles and hides, the Jews played a demonstrably meaningful role in the development of the urban economy. And if, in their activities, the Jews

[215] Z. Muntner, *R. Shabbetai Donnolo* (Heb.), 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1950), II, 28–9, 70–7; Donnolo's *Sefer Merqahot*, in M. Steinschneider, *Pharmakologische Fragmente aus dem zehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1868); A. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, chap. 6; Sharf, "Donnolo," 166ff.

[216] Ibn Khordadhbeh, *Kitâb al-Masâlik wa'l-Mamâlik*, VI, 114.

were generally considered Jews first and foremost, it was nevertheless that separate identity that provided the means for their success in the marketplace as members of society at large.

More than that, however, the experience of taxation challenges even the notion that the government identified the Jews as a distinct body, in either legal or political terms. That is, the government's apparently overarching policy of individual taxation demonstrates that Jewish communal governance had no official standing in the empire. Effectively, this limitation of, or disregard for, Jewish autonomy in relation to the fisc reflected a status of the individual Jew or Jewish family as subject first, and as Jew second. Now, this status did not necessarily favor the Jews financially or otherwise, but it does reflect, in some manner, a set of legal assumptions regarding the place of the Jews in society. And though it must be pointed out that the general awareness of a de facto Jewish body politic certainly coexisted with this individual juridical status, as the Jews of Chios evince, the one status did not erase the other.

In any case, it is not the role of the individual alone that determines the fixedness and belonging of a group in society; for the Jews of Byzantium, their corporate identity also contributed to what we may call, for lack of a better term, integration. Taking advantage of their autonomous society with all its trappings and functions, the Jews built a trade network to be reckoned with, even on the terms of the vast Byzantine economy. They put this network to efficient use by focusing their efforts rather than dispersing them. To be sure, a variety of Jewish pursuits inevitably contributed to the national economy; Jews labored as "workers in metal … finishers of woven materials … dyers and … makers of silk garments," among other professions such as doctors and glassblowers.[217] Nothing in the history of Byzantine Jewry precluded such a variety of economic activity; if anything, the scattered evidence lends itself to precisely these broad conclusions. Nonetheless, at the insistence of the evidence we constantly return to the production and sale of textiles and hides.

Leaving the quantification of economic import aside, which in any case would require numerical data that the record has not preserved, the Jews

[217] Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 69, relies heavily on inference for metal work. For glassblowing, see Angold, *The Byzantine Empire*, 87; Baron, *History*, IV, 168–9, 319–20, n. 20 and Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, PG 86, pt. 2, cols. 2769–70, who describes the miracle of a Jewish boy who is the son of a glassblower, in the mid sixth century; for the seventh century, see A. Kisa *et al.*, *Das Glas im Altertume* (Leipzig, 1908), vol. I, 99–100. For metal working, see Ankori, "Karaite–Rabbanite Relations," 2–4; Ankori, *Karaites*, 178, citing Jacob ben Reuben, *Sefer ha-osher*, on Exodus, in MS no. 8, 33b; Krauss, *Studien*, 80; Starr, "Byzantine Jewry on the Eve of the Arab Conquest," 281, n. 4.

managed to create a niche in the economy at large which was associated particularly – though not exclusively – with themselves and which relied on the infrastructure of their inner economy. Thus, for example: they learned about prices and availability and made requests via Hebrew or Judeo-Arabic communications; their family relations routinely doubled as business opportunities; Jewish law governed their mercantile dealings; their constant travel to Italy, Egypt and Palestine might double as pious and business travel; and locally, their communal cohesion allowed them to dominate the production of given products in certain towns. There can be little doubt that the internal Jewish economy fueled that aspect of the economy that brought the Jews into meaningful contact with non-Jewish Byzantine society, but this communal solidarity also limited the Jews, in that they could not have made an impression on the economy as a whole if they had dispersed their efforts. The Jews effectively pierced the sheer size and power of the broader Byzantine economy, and opened a space for themselves to engage fully with it, only insofar as they pooled their human and material resources in one corner of the market. To put a fine point on it, not only did Jewish economic and social segregation serve as a vehicle for economic integration, it was a necessary precondition for the specific type of integration that they achieved.

Had the Jews participated more evenly in the economic spectrum of the urban centers, their contribution would have been altogether different, as would have been the nature of their integration. If the Jews had pursued a greater variety of industries and professions, distributing their numbers proportionally in each economic sector, the very concept of an outward-oriented, yet identifiably Jewish economy would be a fallacy. Had this been the picture, it would have reflected a certain type of integration – indeed one that is easier to compare to our modern sense of the word but one that would have lacked any Jewish quality. Such an economic climate would naturally lead to a model along the lines of that proposed by Jacob Katz, in which the economic functions in society mitigated the segregationist tendency of their communal life. In the case of Byzantium, and perhaps truer to the medieval sense of how a minority engaged with the majority society, the Jewish economic interests not only reflected but also were born out of segregated communal and economic structures. Additionally, those pursuits exhibited specialization in direct proportion to the paucity of the Jews' numbers. The integrative element becomes apparent in the following: The Jews' foray into the general market succeeded, at the end of the day, not on its own terms in a vacuum, but on its own terms in close and constant negotiation with those of society at large.

The Byzantine state simultaneously made space for, and tried to limit the space of, Byzantine Jewish economic growth, and this give and take bespeaks a basic level of interaction and a common assumption of mutual assent. It also reflects the ambivalence of the relationship, which grew out of the tension between the Jews' antiquity as Romans and their difference as a competing faith. The most compelling example of this ambivalence comes from the *Book of the Eparch*. The tenth-century exclusion of the Jews from the purview of the *Book of the Eparch* (and by extension from the guilds) and their prohibition from silk exportation seem to mean that the Jews competed effectively as a corporate "other." But crucially, the very existence of the infrastructure from which they were excluded admonishes that the textile industry, unlike moneylending of twelfth-century England, for example, was not a "Jewish business." In other words, we cannot chalk the Jewish success up to a monopoly or isolationist collusion; they fit into a larger Byzantine commercial picture. As David Jacoby has pointed out, the Jews excluded in the tenth-century treaties between the Venetians and Byzantines presumably attempted to smuggle their goods amongst those of the Venetians, who enjoyed legal permission to export as a result of concessions.[218] And if the Jews tried to collude and to leverage their segregated infrastructure, they encountered an entire economic and political system that worked hard to counteract these maneuvers. Alternatively, if the government or certain competing interests tried to push the Jews out, the Jews responded by working out external solutions. Tellingly, a general balance reigned. In other words, various interests in the urban Byzantine economy negotiated – tacitly or otherwise – with the Jews in terms that bespeak competition as separate entities; but at the same time, the common denominator, the single playing field for this competition, was a shared social and economic marketplace.

Three aspects of the primary sources confirm the sense of Byzantine Jewry as engaged members of the economic life of Byzantium: first, the matter-of-fact acceptance of the Jews within the normal workings of the Byzantine economy; second, the acknowledgment of the Jews as competitors; and third, a corollary to the second, the failure of attempts to reposition the Jews in order to limit that competition. In their anti-Jewish rants, Christian polemicists refer to the Jewish occupations in the manufacture of hides, for example, without reference to the economic aspect of that work. Even though these comments are hardly matter-of-fact or neutral with regard to religion, they betray the degree to which they take for granted

[218] Jacoby, "Jews and the Silk Industry," 7.

the Jews' role in that industry. Thus, for example, the virulent anti-Jewish tirades of Michael Choniates describe the Jews as "dyers of old clothes," and on the face of it, there is no reason to disbelieve him.[219] In some sense, therefore, the polemic that seeks to isolate the Jews merely betrays their economic acculturation. Equally important is the degree to which the Jews were integrated into the tax structure of the empire. Without the burden of the overly polemical language – to the point where the notion of a Jewish tax, even if present, was virtually irrelevant – the Jews were taxed as income-earners and not as Jews, the connection to their Judaism only coming secondarily, on account of the natural tendency to group them in a given category.

Taken for granted as significant participants in the commercial life of the empire, the Jews also inspired a preoccupation with and reaction to the competition they generated. The best-known attempt to keep Jews out of the international silk trade, from the *Book of the Eparch*, predates, by two centuries, both Benjamin's description of Jewish dominance in silk production and the potential reference to taxation of the Strobilote Jewish traders. In other words, it seems that the Jews managed to maintain their position in the industries and trades traditionally associated with them, despite efforts to hinder them. Thus, on the one hand, the effort to limit the Jews belies economic integration, and on the other hand, the failure of that attempt seems to prove it.

These apparently contradictory messages from the Byzantine sources actually mirror the apparent contradiction of the Jewish ones. Both exhibit powerful inclinations towards separation and delineation, but behind those inclinations lay a reality that militated against those distinctions. One way of resolving the tension in these sources might be to speak of collective integration. From the perspective of the individual, this type of integration may seem to the defeat the point, because it forces the possibility of defining integration in such a way that a group might maintain its corporate difference and still be accepted as an integral part of society. But, in the Middle Ages, no other type of integration could possibly occur, without for example, conversion. Acculturated and expected to move fluidly in society between the public and private sectors, the Jews commanded a place in the Byzantine economy that, by virtue of the recognition afforded them (grudgingly or otherwise), betrayed their acceptance as part of the permanent and distinctly Byzantine economic landscape.

[219] See above, n. 173.

Still, the intermittent religious persecutions and longstanding discriminatory legislation remind us that the Jews held a unique position that represented deep-seated points of incompatibility between Orthodox Christianity and Judaism. Ultimately, fully functional involvement in society did not mean full involvement *tout court*. Barred from most meaningful forms of public service, including military, the Jews brought the force of their corporate identity into the Byzantine experience by engaging in the larger economy in a specialized manner, specifically, in the textile industry. One might characterize the Jews as at once integrated into and segregated from, in competition with and contributing to, the Byzantine economy at large.

CHAPTER 5

Byzantine-Jewish trade in the Commercial Revolution

The dissection of the Byzantine Jewish economy and the examination of its dynamics do not help only to reconceptualize Byzantine-Jewish segregation and integration. This particular lens of economic history also suggests another, more specific historical consequence, at a juncture in which the Jews' experience extends beyond the limits of Byzantine and ethnic history and enters into the larger realm of the Commercial Revolution. Beginning roughly in the tenth century and increasingly in the eleventh, Western Europe met the challenge of demographic growth with ever-evolving and improving agricultural methods.[1] The increased population demanded wider markets, and the enterprising city-states on the Italian coasts rose to the occasion. The leader of these city-states, Venice, developed trade with the Levant and exploited a series of colonies and outposts as transfer points for goods from the Muslim and Byzantine worlds. As these forces evolved, they fundamentally realigned the direction, content and volume of trade across the Mediterranean, and thereby justified the designation as a revolution of economic mentalities and activities, even though the process admittedly took place at more of an evolutionary pace than a revolutionary one.[2]

According to the traditional view of medieval historians, this shift also marked the decline of the Jews from a position of mercantile primacy in the Mediterranean. Prior to the eleventh century, the Jews are viewed as having

[1] Even barring an agricultural revolution, recent scholarship has proven consistent evolution in the Mediterranean: P. Toubert, "Byzantium and the Mediterranean Agrarian Civilization," *EHB*, 379. Toubert, p. 385, points out that the agricultural and demographic growth in Byzantium began before the tenth century, associated with the Commercial Revolution. The demography of the Jews, from this point of view, may not reflect that of the empire, if Toubert is correct. On Byzantine demography, see Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 47–8.

[2] A. Saccocci, "Between East and West: Coin Circulation in the Region of the Alps from the 8th to the 12th Century," in *Pré-actes: XXe Congrès International des études byzantines, Collège de France-Sorbonne, 19–25 août 2001*, vol. III, Communications libres (Paris,2001), 235, describes finds of coins in the Alps region, indicating trade as early as the eighth century.

filled the role of middleman between the Christian West (or North) and the Muslim East (or South), as neutral parties across hostile boundaries. In a few Carolingian sources, the term "Jew" functions practically as a synonym for the term "merchant," and some individual Jewish traders enjoyed special privileges at the royal court.[3] That evidence has led historians to believe that the Jews were the leaders, even monopolists, of the diminished trade of Western Europe between roughly the eighth and tenth centuries.[4] Subsequently, according to this view, the Venetians and other Italians gradually achieved primacy in the eastern trade in, among other things, the luxury items of spices and silks, which had traditionally constituted the niche of the Jews. The Italians, the heralds of the Commercial Revolution, essentially ousted the Jews from their position of prominence.

The Jews of Byzantium have never figured into this scholarly picture both because of their relative anonymity and because of their residing outside of Western Europe.[5] (It is noteworthy, however, that the Jews of Islamic North Africa, the primary authors of the documents found in the Cairo Genizah, have entered the discussion to prove the traditional thesis, though they, too, fall outside the geographic boundaries of Europe.[6]) Still, even granting its apparently tangential position, Byzantine Jewry belongs in the discussion, for it changes the terms of the debate from the point of view of Jewish history in general, and it offers a meaningful alternative to the traditional history of the region. In short, contrary to the prevailing opinions, the economy of Byzantine Jewry points to growth in the period spanning the tenth through twelfth centuries, coinciding with the rise of the Italian Maritimes and their mercantile economy.

Though the Italians surely did command the swelling markets of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Jews played a heretofore unexpected role in that growth.[7] Venice, Genoa and other Maritimes did not push the Byzantine Jews out; rather, the city-states' proliferation of trade increased the opportunity for Jewish trade, just as it had augmented trade in general. Availing themselves of conditions and infrastructure that grew up around Italian trading posts, the Jews were encouraged by the geographic identity of centers of trade and production. With their network of simultaneously social

[3] G. Kisch, *The Jews in Medieval Germany*, 2nd edn. (Chicago, 1949), 318–19; Kisch, *Forschungen zur Rechts- und Sozialgeschichte der Juden in Deutschland während des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart, 1955), 47–55.

[4] Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio," 470 and passim; R. S. Lopez and I. W. Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World* (New York, 1955; reprint with forward by O. R. Constable, 2001), 30.

[5] Of interest are Goitein's comments and questions to Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nell commercio," 472–3.

[6] See O. R. Constable's forward to Lopez and Raymond, *Medieval Trade*, xv–xvii.

[7] Toch, "Between Impotence and Power," 238.

and commercial relationships, the Jews participated in the Venetian system of colonies and outposts in the eastern Mediterranean as early as the eleventh century.[8] Beginning in the thirteenth century, not only Byzantine Jewry benefited from the rise of Italian mercantilism; so did Jews from other regions, who folded themselves into this ascendancy by becoming Venetian subjects and trading under the Serenissma's protection.[9] Eventually, the Jews functioned as a Venetian (and Genoese) parallel, or even client, network that crossed boundaries and transported goods throughout the Mediterranean. To put a fine point on it, the Jews already enjoyed the infrastructure of efficient international trade, and the Italians supplied the accoutrements of state.[10] The Byzantine-Jewish documents leading up to the thirteenth century seem to support this view, and they therefore change the lesson of the Commercial Revolution vis-à-vis the Jews in general. Through their experience, the picture of the tenth to twelfth centuries becomes one of shifting balances and co-option, rather than supersession.

BYZANTIUM AND THE COMMERCIAL REVOLUTION

A broad construction of general Byzantine history necessarily backgrounds this argument of Byzantine-Jewish expansion of the late tenth to twelfth centuries. In fact, the Jewish experience parallels one of the leading trends in Byzantine historiography, which has also reversed the gloomy, conventional wisdom to posit economic growth in the same period.[11] Eschewing a complete review of the evidence that has contributed to this theory, its major exponents nonetheless bear description insofar as they describe a common thread of thought regarding the Jews. To be sure, the Jews simply did not number enough to be reckoned as a cause of the relative success of Byzantium in the Commercial Revolution. But they did partake in that success, wedded as they were to the empire's urban economy. And it is the urban economy, in particular, that Byzantine historiography has rehabilitated.

[8] Jacoby, "Venice and the Venetian Jews," 32.

[9] Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 76–7; D. Jacoby, "Les Juifs vénitiens de Constantinople et leur communauté du XIIIe au milieu du XVe siècle," *REJ* 131 (1972): 397–410; Jacoby, "On the Status of the Jews in the Venetian Colonies in the Middle Ages" (Heb.), *Zion* 27 (1963), 57–69; Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 242; Starr, *Romania*, 28–31; Jacoby, "Silk Crosses the Mediterranean," 67.

[10] See Y. González De Lara, "Enforceability and Risk-Sharing in Financial Contracts: From the Sea Loan to the Commenda in Late Medieval Venice," *The Journal of Economic History* 61/2 (2001): 500–4.

[11] And implies, by contrast, the depression of the previous centuries back to the expansion of Islam and iconoclastic controversy, see Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, chap. 1.

Alan Harvey, one of the leading proponents of this theory, has discerned nothing short of an unmistakable "upsurge in economic activity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries."[12] Not only in trade and urban development but also in demography and agriculture, Byzantium thrived, despite military vacillations (including the signal loss at Manzikert), debasement of its precious-metal coinage in the eighth and ninth decades of the eleventh century, and the dominant commercial presence of the Venetians and other Italians.[13] Harvey's claims take an even more counter-intuitive turn, as compared to prior interpretations of this period; the debasement of precious-metal coinage and the ascendancy of the Venetians actually conspired with other factors to promote the circulation of money as a functional medium of exchange.[14] According to Harvey, the advent of Venice in coastal Greece does not represent commercial subjugation to foreigners but rather a motor for more dynamic commerce.[15] Additionally, a series of centrifugal forces, as described by Alexander Kazhdan and others, included the rise of landlords, whose demands and ability to move resources similarly encouraged economic development.[16] Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Harvey's argument addresses precisely this link between town and country, specifically the increase in population and agricultural production which always lay at the heart of the Byzantine economy.[17]

Pioneering numismatic and currency studies by Michael Hendy undergird the belief in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as the "apogee of Byzantine mercantile development." According to Hendy, the presence of the Italians, so regretted in previous scholarship as a drain on Byzantine resources (as if hearkening to the Ottoman Empire's capitulations of over half a millennium later), did not weaken the economy, but rather participated in the generalized urbanization and reinvestment of capital in industry.[18] Hendy takes care, however, to point out that, given the limited impact of the urban economy in the first place, the vicissitudes of the

[12] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 244.

[13] Harvey, "Economic Expansion," *BMGS* 8 (1982–3): 21–8; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 24–36, esp. pp. 37–8, citing the Jewish evidence of Attaleia and Seleucia.

[14] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 85–9; C. Morrisson, "Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation," in *EHB*, vol. III, 958–61. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire*, 19, points to the contradiction in Harvey's analysis.

[15] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 223. [16] Ibid., 11, 78–9.

[17] Ibid., 22, 57, 198–243; cf. the presumed growth of the population of Chios, Argenti, *Religious Minorities*, 92

[18] M. F. Hendy, "Byzantium 1081–1204: an Economic Reappraisal," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, ser. 5, vol. xx (London, 1970), 50, against the traditional thesis, expressed concisely, for example, by Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," 146–7; for an earlier period but germane in principle, W. Treadgold, *Byzantine State and Finances in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (New York,1982), 93.

Italians were of commensurately restricted import.[19] In regard to this concession, Angeliki Laiou pithily describes how cultural and infrastructural orientation circumscribed that impact: "All of the mechanisms of investment and mercantile activity existed for Byzantine and Italian merchants alike, but the Byzantine merchant labored under disadvantages that were institutional as well as economic."[20] The weight of Byzantine cultural, political and economic assumptions simply did not favor growth of the same dynamism that characterized the mercantilist Italian Maritimes. At the intersection of Hendy's and Laiou's points of view, we may find not so much a direct Italian cause for a distinct effect in Byzantine economics as much as the cross-fertilization of active agents in an urban economy of significant potential.[21]

Somewhat different from both of these positions are those of Michael Angold and Nicolas Svoronos, who question the argument of economic growth altogether. Unconvinced by the conclusions based on the debasement of gold currency, Angold nevertheless concedes that some coastal towns emerged with invigorated commerce in the eleventh century, but they did so in the context of agricultural growth emanating from the Anatolian hinterland. "Outside a handful of Greek towns, where some manufacturing capacity was developing, there was no transformation of the economy. It remained what it had always been: agricultural, localized, with such manufactures as there were heavily concentrated in Constantinople."[22] In questioning the existence and nature of urban growth in this period, Angold's challenge departs from a point of great breadth, looking at Byzantine society as a whole, and in this respect he effectively reaffirms Hendy's admonition to appreciate the limits of influence that we may ascribe to the urban economy. By the same token, however, he appears to acknowledge, fundamentally, that limited urban growth did take place. As if to emphasize those limits, Angold grants the significance of the arrival of the Jews from Fatimid Egypt, an evidently very small group, who "found in the Greek cities conditions which allowed them, if not to prosper, at least to ply their trades and skills."[23] And though he finds the Jews' absence more prevalent than their presence in Asia Minor, he might have just as easily

[19] Hendy, "Byzantium, 1081–1204: the Economy Revisited," 26; C. Morrisson, "Monnaie et finances dans l'empire byzantin Xe–XIVe siècle," in *Hommes et richesses*, ed. C. Abadie-Reynal *et al.*, II, 298, for the limited scope of influence of the crises and debasement of the eleventh century.

[20] Laiou, "Byzantium and the Commercial Revolution," 252; Laiou, "Byzantine Traders and Seafarers," in *The Greeks and the Sea*, ed. Sp. Vryonis (New York, 1993), 79–86.

[21] Hendy, "Byzantium, 1081–1204: the Economy Revisited," 26.

[22] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire*, 88. [23] Ibid.

pointed out that there, too, the Jewish residents of Anatolia who do occur in the record lived overwhelmingly on the coast, most notably in Strobilos and Attaleia. In these considerations, Angold seems to share a basic perception with Svoronos, who also argues an overall decline in the eleventh century, peppered with some urban expansion. Svoronos, however, in different fashion, discerns what he calls a "middle class" that grew out of precisely the urban and commercial expansion that Angold concedes.[24] It was the failure of this class to exert its economic muscle that contributed to the eventual success of the aristocracy.[25]

Perhaps the most interesting and challenging theory comes from Archibald Lewis, who recognized growth in the period of the Comneni, but found it in a different set of historical conditions. He argues on a number of fronts that economic decline from the late eleventh to the late twelfth centuries was nothing more than a myth in the first place.[26] First, he questions the loss of territory as a decisive factor, and then he attacks the claim that "Italian merchants, Pisans, Genoese, and especially Venetians, dominated the external trade of the Empire so completely that they throttled the aspects of indigenous economic life."[27] As regards the role of the Italians and Alexius' famous concessions, he circumscribes them geographically, and points out that the Byzantines did not relinquish privileges in the Black-Sea, Cypriot or Cretan trade.[28] Additionally, the Byzantine Empire and its urban culture fostered the development of technologies that kept them in the forefront of manufacturing – an aspect of the economy that naturally spoke to the Jewish and general interest in the production of finished cloths.[29] The Byzantines preserved, in other words, a key commercial bulwark against the Italians. In this light, the remains of an eleventh-century Byzantine ship off the southwestern coast of Asia Minor, for example, speak to the region's lively trade.[30] Lewis also questions the deleterious effects of the

[24] N. Svoronos, "Société et organisation intérieure dans l'empire byzantin au XIe siècle: les principaux problèmes," *Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, Main Papers 12 (Oxford, 1966); repr. in *Études sur l'organisation intérieure, la société et l'économie de l'empire byzantin* (London, 1973), 8–10.

[25] Ibid., 17.

[26] A. Lewis, "The Economic and Social Development of the Balkan Peninsula during Comneni Times, A.D. 1081–1185," in *Actes du IIe Congrès international des études du sud-est européen* II (Athens, 1972): 407; Lewis, "The Danube Route," 364–8.

[27] Lewis, "Economic and Social Development."

[28] Ibid., 412; A. Lewis, "Mediterranean Maritime Commerce," in *La navigazione mediterranea nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane di studio 25 (Spoleto, 1978), 12, 20.

[29] A. Lewis, "Did the Dark Ages Exist?" *The Texas Quarterly* 2 (1959): 51.

[30] F. van Doorninck, Jr., "The Byzantine Ship at Serçe Limanı," in *Travel in the Byzantine World* (Aldershot, 2002), 137–48; http://ina.tamu.edu/SerceLimani.htm.

adulteration of gold coinage, pointing out that "Comneni gold coins, though their value fluctuated, were not inferior to those issued by Anatolian and Persian Seljuk rulers to the east of them."[31]

In his argument for growth, Lewis presents a nuanced interpretation of the Jews' role. Lewis sees Byzantine success in the industrial strength of Balkan cities and the naval power of the empire, but he also points to the evidence associated with the Jews, i.e., the *Itinerary* of Benjamin of Tudela and the documents of the Cairo Genizah. First and more simply, Lewis invokes Benjamin's account as proof of urban economic expansion. Second and in more complicated fashion, he interprets the Genizah records (in which the number of references to Greek Christians far outstrips those to Greek Jews) to mean that the Christian Byzantines engaged, "even in commerce with Islamic-controlled areas, East and West."[32] Here, he implicitly contrasts the large Byzantine Christian market share to the smaller market-share of the Byzantine Jews, as evidence for intense trade with Egypt. Thus, in the context of Byzantine growth, Lewis appears to present an equivocal view of Jewish economic interests: significant in certain industries, as per Benjamin, but relatively weak in commerce, as per the Genizah. Lewis' position therefore both supports and partially undermines the link between the Jews' trade interests and the larger economic direction of the empire.

Two aspects of the Jews' place in the economy allow for the possibility of their ongoing success in the late tenth to late twelfth centuries, *pace* Lewis. First, as regards their market share, it need not have been large to support intense trade. The small size of the Jewish community, in both absolute and relative terms, made it inevitable that even flourishing Jewish trade should lose market share in an expanding urban and mercantile economy.[33] Second, the patchiness of Jewish sources exacerbates a general methodological problem highlighted by David Jacoby.[34] According to Jacoby, the various facets of trade do not necessarily correspond to one another in intensity; scholars oversimplify the historial landscape when "merchants, ships and goods are generally treated together as components of seaborne trade."[35] Jacoby's conclusions, though limited to the Byzantine–Egyptian routes, contribute to an aggregate picture of Italian ascendancy with an uneven result on the Byzantine commercial economy. Probably muscled out in certain shipping lanes, the Byzantines yet maintained a strong

[31] Lewis, "Economic and Social Development," 410. [32] Ibid., 412, 413–14.
[33] Jacoby, "Byzantine Trade with Egypt," 39–46. [34] Jacoby, "Byzantine Crete," 521.
[35] Jacoby, "Byzantine Trade with Egypt," 30.

position in Cyprus and Crete. All told, Byzantium participated fully in the expanded trade that characterized the Mediterranean at large, dispelling "once and for all a stereotype common among modern historians: that of a Byzantine mercantile group devoid of daring and initiative … passively awaiting at home the arrival of merchandise carried by foreigners."[36]

Through Jacoby's analysis, Lewis' implicit contrast between abundant Byzantine-Christian commerce and anemic Byzantine-Jewish commerce loses some of its force. For their part, the Jews did not captain ships in any significant way; so, too, Muslims and Christians routinely hired the services of one another, depending on the dominant group in a given route, be it along the coast of North Africa or the various north–south axes between Byzantium and Egypt.[37] Jews may not appear in twelfth-century texts relating to shipping, without that silence necessarily reflecting on their contribution to the merchandise carried on those ships.

From all of these theories, despite the tensions among them, a basic sketch of Byzantine-Jewish trade emerges relatively uncontroversially. Silvano Borsari characterizes the major axis of the scholarly dispute as one between the importance or lack thereof of Byzantine trade concessions to Venice and others.[38] But to all appearances, the Byzantine Jews split the dilemma posed by Borsari. The various recent interpretations of Byzantine economic growth or contraction all agree that truck in various goods and services augmented, *at least in the key coastal centers*, during the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. According to recent archeological studies, this condition applies also to far-southern Italy, specifically Oria and Otranto (cities associated with Jewish populations), which also began to revive as trading centers, at the crossroads between East and West around the turn of the millennium.[39] Even the oft-cited Byzantine distaste for trade, especially among the aristocracy, proved no match for the necessity and attraction of certain goods, including the most profitable products, such as silk.[40] Though the precise cause and scope of the impact of this growth have eluded consensus, the Jews belonged to precisely that urban, coastal, commercial realm that expanded in this period, and no one disagrees that the Jews contributed materially to it.[41] We can reasonably speak, therefore,

[36] Ibid., 77. [37] Ibid., 70–2. [38] S. Borsari, *Venezia e Bisanzio nel XII secolo* (Venice, 1988), 13–15.
[39] P. Arthur, "Economic Expansion in Byzantine Apulia," in *Histoire et culture dans l'Italie byzantine* (Rome, 2006), 399.
[40] M. Gérolymatou, "L'aristocratie et le commerce (IXe–XIIe siècles)," in *Pré-actes: XXe Congrès International des études byzantines, Collège de France-Sorbonne, 19–25 août 2001*, vol. III, Communications libres (Paris, 2001), 192.
[41] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire*, 86–8.

of a Jewish minority, naturally placed at the center of such commercial development as we can discern. There, they fully engaged in and benefited from the commercial expansion heralded by the Italian enterprise, even if confined to a narrow slice of life in the empire. And as a point of interpretation, we ought to entertain the notion that some of the economic sanctions imposed upon them reflected the Jews' ability to succeed in the market.[42]

If anything, this point about the Jews is a decidedly unambitious one, since it echoes the demographic and economic trends already noted by others, such as Goitein, Ankori and a range of Byzantinists cited above. That is, placing the Jews in the context of Byzantine growth constitutes as much an historiographical argument as an historical one. The Jews belong in the conversation about the nature and timing of this growth, as presented by numerous scholars. Admittedly, this position does pose challenges. The thesis of growth elevates the role of non-quantifiable evidence of Byzantine Jewry, such as the subjective impressions of individuals. The difficult-to-measure demographic trend towards the empire and the characterizations of economic opportunity, as conveyed by the twelfth-century doctor in Seleucia and Benjamin of Tudela, for example, loom large in the picture of Jewish commercial success in the period spanning the tenth to twelfth centuries.[43] All the same, these same sources have the benefit of being authored by contemporary Jews who characterize their own fate with relative transparency of purpose. And crucially, though these sources basically agree with the emerging consensus on Byzantine economic history in towns and cities in the same period, they do so from their own, independent perspective. Perhaps most notably, this thesis of Jewish success in the Commercial Revolution calls into question one of the longest-held tenets of Mediterranean Jewish history.[44]

THE PIRENNE THESIS AND MEDITERRANEAN JEWRY

The prevailing theory with regard to the European Jews in medieval trade originated with Henri Pirenne, who posited their supremacy through the Carolingian period and their subsequent ouster at the hands of the Italian city-states beginning in the tenth century.[45] According to his theory, the

[42] R.-J. Lilie, *Handel und Politik* (Amsterdam, 1984), 5.
[43] See above, chap. 2, n. 145 and chap. 4, n. 165.
[44] Hendy, "Byzantium 1081–1204," 48, citing, for example, Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia."
[45] Pirenne, *Economic and Social History*, 113–14.

burgeoning Italian city-states essentially enjoyed a similar infrastructure to the Jews, but with the crucial, dual advantage of the power of state and the sanction of Christianity. Eliyahu Ashtor, a self-proclaimed orthodox Pirennist, cleaves to this argument and elaborates on it in reference to Jewish and other sources; he avers that the East–West axis of Mediterranean trade, once controlled by the likes of the Jewish Radhanite traders, gradually fell to the Venetians, the Genoese and other Italian Maritimes.[46] Later twentieth-century scholarship, while increasingly challenging the notion of a Jewish quasi-monopoly in early medieval commerce, has nevertheless generally persisted in the second half of the Pirenne–Ashtor interpretation, namely, that of Jewish decline during the Commercial Revolution.[47]

Three arguments uphold the traditional theory: (1) that Western Europe was economically underdeveloped in the Carolingian period; (2) that the Jews functioned as the classic – or even unique – middlemen between the Muslims and Christians; and (3) that the likes of Venice and Genoa subsequently displaced the Jews. The first pillar of the thesis is a precondition for the concept of a commercial revolution, and the evidence regarding the Jews does not contradict it, though recent works have called into question the pace of this change or challenged the "gloomy picture" of Western European trade, which "fails to take into account the brisker activity of certain regions [and] the persistence of urban traditions in a large part of the South."[48] The last two elements of the argument, however,

[46] Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio," 404, argues for the preeminence of the Jews in international trade prior to the rise of the Italian city-states: in the ninth century, he refers to the Radhanites of Ibn Khordadhbeh and the responsa of the geonim, which deal in silk. Ashtor also provides some anecdotes which indicate the imporantance of the Jewish role in trade, none of which deals with Byzantine Jews per se. Also E. Ashtor, "Quelques observations d'un orientaliste sur la thèse de Pirenne," *JESHO* 13 (1970): 166–94; Ashtor, "Nouvelles réflexions sur la thèse de Pirenne," *Revue suisse d'histoire* 20 (1970): 601–7; A. S. Ehrenkreutz, "Another Orientalist's Remarks Concerning the Pirenne Thesis," *JESHO* 15 (1972): 96.

[47] See variations on Pirenne's thesis of the supersession of the Jews in trade: R. S. Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1971), 60–9; Baron *et al*., *Economic History*, 28–9, 34; Baron, *History*, IV, 171ff.; Heyd, *Histoire*, I, 125ff.; S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts throughout the Ages* (New York, 1955), 105ff.; I. Schipper, *Jewish Economic History* (Tel Aviv, 1935–6), vol. I, 154ff. (Heb.); Salzman, *Ahimaaz*, 43 and notes; M. Arkin, *Aspects of Jewish Economic History* (Philadelphia, 1975), 38–9; N. J. G. Pounds, *An Economic History of Medieval Europe*. 2nd edn. (New York, 1994), 71, 105, 351. Despite the wide acceptance of the theory's assumptions, we find evidence of Jewish leaders in trade after the rise of Venice, such as Eliezer b. Nathan, *Sefer Raban*, no. 295, who remarks that "Nowadays, we are living on commerce only." R. Chazan, *Church, State and Jews in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1980), 61–4, points out the mercantilistic aspects of charters in the Holy Roman Empire; Chazen, *In the Year 1096* (Philadelphia, 1996), 9.

[48] McCormick, *Origins*, 700; R. S. Lopez, "The Trade of Medieval Europe: The South," 316.

do not necessarily apply to the Jews in Western Europe and certainly not to Byzantine Jewry.[49]

The notion of Jewish middlemen in Western Europe coincides with the idea of their exceptionality in, even monopoly of, international trade prior to the tenth century. Jews alone, the theory goes, straddled the hostile worlds of Islam and Christendom. In fact, however, even the proponents of this interpretation apply it very narrowly – and equivocally at that – to the "more backward regions of Western Europe, such as the interior provinces of France and Germany."[50] More convincingly, recent scholarship has largely overturned this second pillar of the Pirenne thesis altogether, by pointing to salient Muslim–Christian contacts during the Carolingian period, in addition to the full panoply of intra-European trade and commerce with Byzantium via Italy.[51] Ashtor himself acknowledges non-Jewish contact between the two halves of the Mediterranean, pointing to Muslims who called at French ports.[52] Other minorities, such as the Syrians, also played the relatively limited markets to their advantage.[53] In similar fashion, numerous documents place Venice prominently on the Carolingian scene, already in the period previously designated as Jewish-controlled.[54] One such document, from the year 840, characterizes the Venetians as purveyors of pelts and textiles to the court of Lothar, grandson of Charlemagne. Here, not only do the Venetians deal in goods typically associated with the Jews, but they are

[49] A. Udovitch, in his comments on E. Ashtor's paper, in *Gli Ebrei dell'alto medioevo*, 468, also brings into question the presumed dominance of Jews prior to the rise of the Italian city-states, as does K. Stow, *Alienated Minority* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 42, 215–16. Stow points out that the dominance attributed to the Jews may be questionable, though he clearly sees the decline in the eleventh century as historical.

[50] Lopez and Raymond, *Medieval Trade*, 29–30; ibid., 36: "Some scholars have maintained that the larger part of the merchants in France were Jews rather than Gallo-Romans or Franks." Other scholars, as Lopez and Raymond point out, include R. Doehard, "Au temps de Charlemagne et des Normands," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilizations* 2 (1947): 268–80.

[51] The earliest challenger to Pirenne in this regard, M. Lombard, "Les bases monétaires d'une suprématie économique," *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 2 (1947); Lombard, *Les métaux précieux* (Paris, 1974), argued that the Muslim Conquest actually engendered trade and communication. Since then, scholars have increasingly noticed the points of interaction between Muslim South and Christian North. Collected studies in Alfred F. Havighurst, *The Pirenne Thesis*, 3rd edn. (Lexington, Toronto and London, 1976), 8. Most recently and definitively, McCormick, *Origins*, 694–5.

[52] Ashtor, "Quelques observations," 186, hastens to point out that the ongoing insecurity of sea-lanes preempted large-scale trade. Though true, this limitation on trade does not speak to the relative prominence of the Jews.

[53] H. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities, Their Origins and the Revival of Trade*, trans. F. D. Halsey (Princeton, 1952), reprinted in Havighurst, *The Pirenne Thesis*, 8. P. Lambrechts, "Les thèses de Henri Pirenne," *Byzantion* 14/2 (1939): 533–5, points out Pirenne's contemporaries who already disagreed with this aspect of his argument, even though Lambrechts himself seems more favorable towards it.

[54] A. Verhulst, *The Carolingian Economy* (Cambridge, 2002), 108–13.

even characterized according to the stereotyped image of the Jew, as "a people that neither tills, nor sows, nor plants grapes."[55] Similarly, finds from the Alpine region from as early as the eighth century point to lively trade, not only in terms of the movement of goods but also in the use of currency.[56] Even in the European North, the Jews did not stand alone in the anemic sector of trade.[57] In sum, despite the well-known privileges of the Jews at the Carolingian court, participants of other ethnicities and polities have already taken their place in the historical reconstruction medieval trade.[58]

Thus, even from the perspective within the Carolingian world, the notion of Jewish mercantile preeminence in Western Europe has fallen before a more nuanced characterization, though it still persists regarding some aspects of the economy, most notably the slave trade.[59] Michael Toch has decisively shattered this last vestige of the traditional view of the Carolingian economy, which relies on the "notion of a Jewish slave trade, an idea that has become deeply embedded in our view of the economics of eighth-to-eleventh-century continental Europe."[60] From this point of departure, he demonstrates that the broader concept of the Jewish monopoly similarly does not hold.[61] And this reconfigured historiography pertains to the eastern reaches of the Jewish population as well. Perhaps most notably from the point of view of Byzantine Jewry, east–west and north–south trade through Central Asia brought the Khazars into contact with a wide variety of people; at the dawn of the tenth century, northern and

[55] *Instituta Regalia*, MGH, Scriptores 30, ed. A. Hofmeister (Leipzig, 1934), vol. II, 1453, cap. 4. For the prowess of the Venetians at in this earlier period, see three articles in the volume *Mercati e mercanti nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane di studio 40 (Spoleto, 1993): G. Ortalli, "Il mercante e lo stato," 96–7; H. Z. Tucci, "Negociare in omnibus partibus per terram et per aquam: il mercante veneziano," 58–60; A. O. Citarella, "Merchants, Markets and Merchandise in Southern Italy in the High Middle Ages," 261ff., speaks of southern Italy as a hub of trade of all types among many nations. M. Tangheroni, *Commercio e navigazione nel medioevo* (Rome and Bari, 1996), 49, who otherwise accepts the Pirenne–Ashtor thesis, concedes that the Venetians and Amalfitans, even in the ninth century, maintained routes open to the East.

[56] Saccocci, "Between East and West," 235.

[57] M. Postan, *Medieval Trade and Finance* (Cambridge, 1973), 138–45.

[58] Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens*, 16–18; Ashtor, "Quelques observations," 187; Pirenne, *Economic and Social History*, 9–10, 113–14; Abulafia, "Asia, Africa and the Trade of Medieval Europe," 416, who points out that "it is not clear that references in western sources to 'Jewish' merchants should be understood to mean that those merchants were all Jewish by religion or descent."

[59] Verhulst, *Carolingian Economy*, 104, relies on Charles Verlinden's outdated *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale* (Bruges, 1955), vol. I, 709–15.

[60] See the challenges of M. Toch, "The Jews of Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Slave Traders?" (Heb.) *Zion* 64/1 (1999): 39–63, esp. 43–4; Toch, "Jews and Commerce: Modern Fancies and Medieval Realities," in *Il ruolo economico delle minoranze in Europa, secc. XIII–XVIII*, ed. S. Cavaciocchi, Settimane di studio, 31 (Florence, 2000), 43–56.

[61] M. Toch, "Between Impotence and Power," 237.

eastern Europeans pursued trade with the Muslim Middle East, including Scandinavians, Slavs, Bulgars and Jews, continuing into the eleventh and twelfth centuries as well.[62] Ultimately, this more broadly construed scope of trade vindicates a fuller appreciation of its direction and variety of its participants. Finally, in light of this new, kaleidoscopic view of European commerce, modern scholars have abandoned Pirenne's cultural–religious barrier between Christendom and the Islamic world and, with it, the need to construe the Jews as middlemen.

While a full-fledged challenge to the theory of Jewish dominance warrants a study of its own, one set of evidence demands particular attention for its prominence in variations on Pirenne's theory and for its link to the Jews of Byzantium.[63] The Radhanites were Jewish merchants who traversed the breadth of Europe and Asia during the ninth century, buying and selling high-end goods. If modern scholarship now supports the notion that the Jews numbered, already in the Carolingian period, among a previously unacknowledged spectrum of competitors, it nevertheless persists in attributing to Jewish Radhanites a remarkable share of the international market in luxury goods. In addition to their presumed leadership in affairs commercial, they also constitute the main connection between these theories of Western Jewish trade and that of Byzantine Jewry, on account of their stops in Byzantium. Simply put, not only Ashtor but a number of other scholars as well still attribute primacy to the Radhanites in international trade, and with that primacy, a buttress to the supposed Jewish dominance of the ninth century.[64]

[62] Lewis, "Was Eastern Europe European?" 22, 25 and notes; Lewis, "The Danube Route," 364.

[63] One of the major questions raised about the Radhanites has been that of the origin of their name. At this point, it requires no further elaboration, and I think it sufficient to follow Gil, "The Radhanite Merchants," 314–22, who argues their origin in Radhan and Baghdad. In relation to the Pirenne thesis, L. Cansdale, "The Radhanites: Ninth Century Jewish International Traders," *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 10 (1996).

[64] E. Ashtor, "Aperçus sur les Rahdanites," 245–75; H. Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, trans. B. Miall (London, 1954), 257–8. The Radhanites stopped in, among other cities, Constantinople (Ibn Khordadhbeh, *Kitâb al-Masâlik*, 6:114). Except for the Radhanites, the school of Pirenne focuses on the Jews of Western Europe, as does Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio," 406. Regarding the period prior to the Crusades, Heyd, *Histoire*, I, 125, does believe that the Jews were important in trade, but he refers only to Western Jews. Gil, "The Radhanite Merchants," 323, argues that the Radhanites in fact enjoyed an "unrivaled position in the international trade of that period," and certainly that their sphere of activity included not only Constantinople but also Byzantine southern Italy, pp. 310–11. Pirenne, *Economic and Social History*, 113–14, 9–10. Abulafia, "Asia, Africa and the Trade of Medieval Europe," 416–18, points out the ambiguity of the merchants dubbed "Jewish," but he also assumes a great deal regarding the identity of the Radhanites, attributing to them "a central role in the organisation of the slave trade," though no direct evidence is available.

Indubitably, these mysterious traders played some role in Mediterranean international trade, but the heavy dependence on them to measure the Jewish participation in medieval commerce distorts a more complicated situation, in which the Byzantine Jews, for their part, prospered most notably *after* the disappearance of the Radhanites. Nonetheless, the Radhanites seem to fit well with the Pirenne thesis of Jewish dominance, precisely because of the vast geographical span of their travels, the period of their activity, and the type and value of their wares.[65] According to Ibn Khordadhbeh, on the eastward leg of their travels the Radhanites moved Western "eunuchs, female slaves, boys, [silk] brocade, castor, marten, and other furs and swords," and returning to the West, they carried spices.[66] In this and other routes, the Radhanites emerge as a coherent trading group, unfettered by multiple middlemen along the way and able to carry goods from the origin to the terminus of their circuit and to all points in between.[67]

Their route is impressive indeed, but a number of factors vitiate the ascendancy heretofore attributed to these Jewish traders. These factors all originate in the significant silence of the sources on key questions. To wit: In referring to the sundry luxury goods they procured, Ibn Khordadhbeh fails to indicate preeminence – or even prominence – anywhere in his account. Even more notably, the very existence of the Radhanites has been preserved in only two accounts: one by Ibn Khordadhbeh and another by Ibn al-Faqih, who depends on the former.[68] Insofar as the limitations of the sources inform our understanding of the phenomenon they relate, it seems clear that the Radhanites flourished only during or immediately prior to the ninth century, and one school of historical interpretation circumscribes their activity accordingly.[69] Alternative hypotheses attributing greater longevity to the Radhanites exist, but they all rely on broad

[65] According to Abulafia, "Asia, Africa and the Trade of Medieval Europe," 418, the decline of the Radhanites owes itself to the rise of the mercantile Italians. As others, Abulafia ascribes great import to the Radhanites, implying commensurate significance to their disappearance from the record.

[66] Ibn Khordadhbeh, *The Book of Ways and Kingdoms*, excerpted and trans. by Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 2–3. Adler follows de Goeje's translation of Ibn Khordadhbeh, *Kitâb al-Masâlik*, VI, 114. However, the text as edited by de Goeje, p. 153, contains the word *dîbâj*, which implies silk and which I have added, as per Gil's translation in *Jews in Islamic Countries*, 618. Excerpted in Starr, *JBE*, 111.

[67] Ashtor, "Quelques observations," 186, believes that the Radhanites did not individually cover the entire route or routes, but that there were various subgroups along the way. There is no clear evidence either way; our only source is silent on this issue. In either case, an unbroken chain of Radhanites or a single group of Radhanites, they clearly managed to import and export over great distances.

[68] Ahmed b. Muhammad Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadhani, *Kitab al-buldan*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1885), apud Gil, "The Radhanite Merchants," 306–7; Cansdale, "The Radhanites," 65. Alternatively, they both rely on an older source, as per Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries*, 624–5.

[69] Ashtor, "Aperçus sur les Radhanites," 246–51, places them only in the mid ninth century, providing a clear argument for determining their dates.

identitifications of who they were. Nigel Thomas, for example, has argued for a more protracted period of Radhanite activity, relying on ties to the Khazar Empire. Such connections, in and of themselves, pose no challenge to the sources, which explicitly mention Khazaria; but more problematically and speculatively, Thomas infers a shared destiny between the Khazars and the Radhanites.[70] (The Khazars, we know, thrived into the tenth century.) As they now exist, the sources allow nothing more than a chain of circumstantial inferences, with each link building on the previous assumption. Even though any given element of this conceptual chain may be reasonable in and of itself, it must contend with the deafening silence of the sources at every turn.

Michael McCormick has taken up the challenge of the sources, arguing that the Radhanites are not an otherwise unattested group at all. Rather, he follows the school of thought that interprets Ibn Kordadhbeh's account as a conflation and confusion of the Radhanites with various groups of Jews who benefited from great cohesion across enormous distances.[71] Here, McCormick agrees with Thomas and others, who similarly assume that Western Jews "cooperated with the Râdhânites, and Ibn Kurdâdhbih seems to have lumped them together with that group."[72] Accordingly, the Radhanites constitute the eastern branch (the one known to Ibn Khordadhbeh) of a far-reaching, probably informal, Jewish network that procured highly exotic luxury goods and contributed materially to the core of contemporary trade.[73] Under these broad definitions, the Radhanites, in order to fit into the scheme of eighth- and ninth-century Jewish commercial dominance, are stretched and reconceived. But in any case, when defined by the source alone, they appear more notable for their qualities as multilingual "merchant adventurers" than for their market impact.[74]

Even accepting McCormick's point of view, it does not shed much light on the Jewish mercantile successes in the eighth and ninth centuries in Western Europe, except to confirm that which we already know: the Jews

[70] Thomas, "Râdhânites," 14–19; Cansdale, "The Radhanites," 74–5, concurs.

[71] McCormick, *Origins*, 688–95.

[72] Cf. Thomas, "Râdhânites," 16, against C. Cahen, "Quelques questions sur Radanites," *Der Islam* 48 (1972), 333–4.

[73] Thomas, " Râdhânites," 17. Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio," 406, is at pains to prove Jewish supremacy in international commerce on the routes between East and West. Likewise, in the following pages, he points out the Genizah evidence that reveals competition in the eleventh–twelfth centuries from Westerners. However, none of his proofs addresses the Byzantine Jews. In any case, regardless of Byzantine Jewry, competition itself – universally acknowledged – need not prove decline.

[74] See L. Rabinowitz, *Jewish Merchant Adventurers* (London, 1948).

succeeded as international merchants, because they availed themselves of well-worn, internal paths of communication and exchange over great distances. Furthermore, no one disputes that the Jews' network of contacts and infrastructure provided them an opportunity to thrive in trade. The rub lies in their perceived exceptionality, as Moshe Gil puts it:

> There are those who sought to see things through Pirenne's eyes: the ties were severed to such an extent that only the Jews were able to maintain the trade between the Islamic countries and Europe. Yet this is an undoubtedly farfetched way of looking at things; the Jews had a central function in international trade before Islamic rule, and they continued to play that role under Islam as well.[75]

In other words, prominence – even disproportionate prominence – itself poses no problem; it is the uniqueness attributed to the Jews as international merchants and the presumed monopoly associated with them in Carolingian Europe that the Radhanites cannot possibly speak to.[76] We revert, then, to the general understanding of Jews as important traders, but must reconsider the context in which they lived and worked, finding that the Radhanites do not justify, nor even necessarily contribute to, the notion of the Jews as the uncontested *mercator* par excellence.

More accurately, this fascinating group belongs in the more variegated mix of contemporary trade, in which regional merchants bridged, at overlapping points, the exchange of products from far away.[77] Though important players in that matrix, the Radhanites' real relevance to the Pirenne thesis ultimately hinges on a simple matter of interpretation and degree: how disproportionate, and hence remarkable, was the Radhanite presence? Rather than supporting a quantification of the Radhanites' influence on the market, the evidence allows only a description of the nature of their commerce. Most notable was the high value and variety of their merchandise on the one hand, and their ability to move it themselves on the other; this much Ibn Khordadhbeh describes explicitly. Granted, therefore, that from China to Spain the Radhanites functioned as a notably efficient unit for the purchase, sale and distribution of precious goods, and they therefore deserve some attribution of importance in terms of the efficiency and profitability of their travels. At the same time, however, our understanding of the Radhanites also needs to account for the scantiness of, and lack of

[75] Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries*, 637.

[76] J.-P. Devroey and C. Brouwer, "La participation des Juifs au commerce dans le monde franc," in *Voyages et voyageurs à Byzance et en Occident du VIe au XIe siècle*, ed. A. Dierkens and J.-M. Sansterre (Geneva, 2000), 369.

[77] McCormick, *Origins*, 614–17.

independent corroboration for, the sources. Given these characteristics, the Radhanites' contribution to the Mediterranean market can be described in terms of availability, quality and, perhaps, price, but even this much is inferred.[78] The Radhanites offered to the markets of the Mediterranean an outlet for a variety of luxury and high-priced items, directly from the source where they bought them. Possibly, in providing this particular advantage, they were also able to offer them at competitive prices. Ultimately, however, Ibn Khordadhbeh does not indicate at any point that the Radhanites controlled any market, but rather that they had broad access to many of them.

In sum, we should not assume more than the new picture of Carolingian trade, in its greater variety and competition, allows: The Jews, with the colorful and intriguing Radhanites among them, constituted an important population in international trade, and they, like the Italians and Syrians, had crucial access to products from distant lands.[79] This more textured historiography indicates that prevailing conditions were not as bleak as typically imagined, and if the Jews did exert disproportionate influence, they did not do so in a vacuum or unchecked.[80] As a bulwark of Ashtor's adherence to Pirenne's theory, intended to prove Jewish prowess in the ninth century, the Radhanites do not meet the burden of proof, while scholarship in the larger realm of Carolingian trade has moreover come to view the Jews as one among a variety of trading peoples.

Despite a broad-based revision of the Pirenne thesis on the point of Jewish exceptionality, scholarship has generally hewn closely to its third pillar, namely, that the Jews fell by the wayside as the Venetians and others muscled them out of Mediterranean markets. Marco Tangheroni describes this change in the context of Benjamin of Tudela's description of Genoa, in which

> the almost complete absence of Jews in Genoa is striking: just two families, recent immigrants. But this reliable description ought not be interpreted as a negative comment about the attractiveness of the Ligurian town; on the contrary, precisely the early appearance of people from every origin, from Piedmont, Lombardia, Lucca, Provence, Catalonia … rendered the presence of Jewish merchants less necessary.[81]

Tangheroni and those whom he follows assume that competition with and relative paucity of Jews meant Jewish decline. As an approach, it overlooks the fact that the Jews, a small minority, needed only a small

[78] Ibid., 690. [79] Verhulst, *Carolingian Economy*, 104.
[80] Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens*, 15. [81] Tangheroni, *Commercio*, 143.

niche to succeed. Even more problematically, as an interpretation of Benjamin's description, this position also overlooks the fact that the Jews, "recent immigrants," arrived together with the entrepreneurial Christians, partaking in the same expansion. More to the point, this position reflects a larger set of assumptions that fail to account for the evidence of Jewish successes, particularly in Byzantium in the tenth to twelfth centuries. There, even amidst the Venetian supremacy, the Jews nonetheless held their own, and their constancy gainsays Pirenne's argument of Jewish decline in that period. Just as the Byzantine Empire's urban economy benefited from the Venetian expansion of trade, so too, the Jewish minority was able to turn the changes in Mediterranean commerce to their advantage.

First of all, the Jews continued to enjoy the international relationships which had allowed them to develop their trade in the first place.[82] Thus, by the beginning of the eleventh century when a new generation of Jews from the Islamic world began to migrate to Byzantium and to exploit those ties, they helped to revitalize the economy there.[83] Reflecting this dynamism, not only did the Jews loom large in the textile market in certain Byzantine cities, but they even competed with the Italians abroad, and when these imposed themselves on the capital, beginning in 1204, many Jews appeared under the aegis of Venice or Genoa, trading accordingly.[84] Secondly, Venice folded herself into the Byzantine economy during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, increasing the opportunities for economic cooperation and integration.[85] As early as the end of the eleventh century, Venice invested in the Theban silk industry, notably associated with the Jews before and afterwards.[86] Viewed thus from the Jewish perspective, Venetian ascendancy in trade more accurately expanded the market rather than displaced the Jews from one corner of it.[87] Thirdly, the Jews' concentration in textiles and

[82] In the context of Mediterranean trade, the Jews managed to keep their far-flung and sophisticated – if informal – network; see Dimitroukas, *Reisen*, 151.

[83] A. Greif, "Reputation and coalitions," 862; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 156–9, 186–92.

[84] A brief perusal of Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, will immediately make the Jewish participation in Venetian trade apparent. See also D. Jacoby, "Les Génois dans l'Empire Byzantin: citoyens, sujets et protégés (1261–1453)," *La storia dei genovesi* 9 (1989): 245, 259–60.

[85] D. Jacoby, "Italian Privileges and Trade in Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade: a Reconsideration," *Anuario de estudios medievales* 24 (1994): 365–6; Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 219–20.

[86] A. Louvi-Kizi, "Thebes," in *EHB*, 367–8, 631–2; Jacoby, "Silk Crosses the Mediterranean," 66–7.

[87] Here is where the crux of Ashtor's argument ("Gli Ebrei nel commercio," 406) disconnects from the modern understanding of the growth – as opposed to the diminution – in the Byzatine economy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. As applied to the Byzantine Jews, who clearly capitalized on this sea change, it becomes clear that they were not pushed out by the Venetians.

Jacoby, "The Byzantine Outsider in Trade," 131, dates the rise in trade among the elite of Byzantine society to the eleventh century, in consonance with the Harvey position of economic expansion.

leathers created a confluence of interests with the Venetians; given the opportunity, the Jews eventually began to evade Byzantine imperial legislation by becoming protégés or nationals (as opposed to citizens) of the Italians. Especially in the late Byzantine period, Jews routinely traded under the flag of the Italian city-states.[88]

Numerous pieces of evidence bear out this reconstruction, the first being the most general consideration, i.e., that of the economic conditions of the empire at large. Only relatively recently has scholarship looked beyond the political debacle associated with the year 1204 and the sacking of Constantinople, in order to recognize the possibility of economic growth prior to it.[89] Also in a general sense, the northern aspect of Mediterranean trade raises interesting, if unanswerable, questions about the role of the Khazars' Jewishness, while it also points to non-Khazar Jews who continued mercantile activity into the tenth century and beyond.[90] More specifically, as active participants in Byzantine trade, it comes as no surprise that the Jews should have both ridden the coat-tails of that generalized expansion and contributed to it, most notably by virtue of their immigration to the empire. Additionally, Jewish sources have something to say, albeit indirectly, about the theories of debasement of gold and silver coins and economic dynamism.[91] Pertinent to these claims, a cache of small-denomination, twelfth-century coinage has recently been found in Corinth. In the context of the new scholarly understanding of the twelfth century, D. M. Metcalf argues that these coins not only illustrate the vitalization of trade in the region, but also speak circumstantially to Jewish activity, even when allowing for the methodological pitfalls of judging economic vitality on the basis of finds and hoards.[92] To judge from Benjamin of Tudela's census, the three hundred Jews in the city of Corinth contributed to that economic vigor, and we might expect that they did so in connection with the tanning and textile industry in nearby Thebes, where Benjamin explicitly describes their activity. The association of the Corinthian Jews to the textile industry in the twelfth century becomes explicit with the raids on Greece by Roger II, who transferred the

[88] Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 242; Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 50–60.

[89] Hendy, *Alexius to Michael VIII*, 5, 25; Laiou, "Exchange and Trade," 714, 737.

[90] Lewis, "Was Eastern Europe European?" 26.

[91] For an example of how the thesis of Byzantine decline has entered the field of Jewish Studies, see Ankori, *Karaites*, 120, n. 115; Grierson, *Byzantine Coinage*, 2–3.

[92] D. M. Metcalf, *Coinage in Southeastern Europe* (London, 1979), 237–8; Metcalf, "How Extensive Was the Issue of Folles during the Years 775–820?" *Byzantion* 37 (1967): 270–8. More recently, see V. Penna, "Numismatic Circulation in Corinth from 976–1204," in *EHB*, 655–8. Regarding coins in general, S. Baron noted the absence of the Jews from the imperial minting works, clearly a function of their exclusion from the civil service in general; see Baron, *History*, IV, 210–11.

Jewish silk workers of Corinth, Thebes and other Greek towns to Sicily, where sericulture became an important industry.[93]

Currency also comes into play in Western and Central Europe, where some Jewish sources discuss gold coinage. Irving Agus claims that occasional gold coins mentioned in eleventh- and twelfth-century responsa from Western Europe originated either from Muslim countries or Byzantium. He bases his conclusion on the scarcity of such currency in Europe at the time. He further argues that this connection proves trade between European and Byzantine Jews.[94] Robert Sabatino Lopez, in his review of Agus' *Urban Civilization in Pre-Crusade Europe*, roundly criticizes this point, observing that Agus' reliance on the unnamed coins fails to meet historical standards.[95] Supporting Agus' case, however, the itinerary of the tenth-century traveler Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub clearly attributes such coins to Byzantium. Prague, according to Ibrahim, "is the richest of cities in trade … Rus and Slavs come to her with their wares, and to her inhabitants come Muslims and Jews from the lands of the Turks – also with their wares and with Byzantine *mithqals*."[96] Certainly Lopez's case for caution justifies itself, because Agus does fail to substantiate his theory; Ibn Ya'qub, however, may have partially done so for him.[97]

Particular to the Jews and independent of their association with the empire was, yet again, their extensive international network. The tenth-century Spanish-Jewish potentate, Hasdai ibn Shaprut, in his early tenth-century letter to King Joseph of the Khazars, describes his inability to contact the Khazars via the most obvious route, the royal court at Constantinople. His letter finds an alternative itinerary from Spain to "the king of the Slavs … to

[93] Starr, *JBE*, 223; Starr differs from Krauss, *Studien*, 73, who claims that the Jews actually monopolized the silk industry in their new home of Sicily, although the evidence from the *Annales Cavenses*, in MGH, *Scriptores* 3, ed. G. Pertz, (Hannover, 1839), 192, as cited by Starr, contradicts this belief.

[94] Agus, *Urban Civilization*, 146; J. Mueller, *She'elot u-teshuvot ge'one mizraḥ u-ma'arav* (Berlin, 1888), 213.

[95] R. S. Lopez, "Review of *Urban Civilization in Pre-Crusade Europe*, by I. Agus," *Speculum* 42 (1967): 340–3.

[96] F. Westberg (ed. and trans.), *Ibrahims-ibn-Jakub's Reisebericht über die Slawenlande aus dem Jahre 965*, Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St. Petersbourg, ser. 7, vol. III, no. 4 (1898): 53.

[97] For the expanding eastern trade to the north of the Mediterranean, see Baron, *History*, IV, 323, n. 28.

Ibn Ya'qub poses some interesting questions for the investigation of the trade between Eastern Europe and Khazaria. The most convincing evaluation of Ibn Ya'qub's purpose is espoused by the earlier interpreters, Westberg and Kunik; see Westberg, "*Reisebericht*," 73 and A. Kunik and V. R. Rosen, "Nachrichten al-Bekri's und anderer Autoren über Russland and die Slawen," *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St. Petersbourg* 32/2 (1878–1903): Appendix, 68–9. All of these editors favor a trade motive for Ibn Ya'qub's travels, thereby explaining why he focused on the lesser-known towns, which could offer interesting new opportunities. The two scholars also concur that Ibn Ya'qub must have traveled after the Khazars lost the upper hand in the region (Westberg, 79; Kunik and Rosen, 73–4).

the Jews living in the land of the Hungarians … thence to Bulgaria," and ultimately to the Khazar kingdom.[98] Hasdai thereby makes use of an entire network of Jews from throughout Eastern Europe and in Byzantium.[99] The impression of such a network, intertwined with a complex of river and overland commerce among local peoples, finds confirmation in other Genizah documents relating the Jews of Byzantium to those in Russia.[100] Further, Hasdai's letter, in combination with the evidence regarding the Radhanites of the previous century, illumines the possible contribution of the Jews – Byzantine and otherwise – to the Slavic market.[101] So it is that in Hasdai's time, at the dawn of Italian expansion, the Jews were poised to take full advantage of the burgeoning markets, thanks to their cohesive dispersion.

The most immediate and well-attested aspect of their social and economic infrastructure, the north–south axis of communication between Byzantium and Egypt, flourished during the Commercial Revolution. Byzantine Jews have left many traces of their presence in Egypt, and one case appears to refer to businessmen. From mid eleventh-century Fustat, Joseph writes in Judeo-Arabic to his unnamed relative in Aden, discussing the fates of various family members. Joseph, the author expresses his outrage at the intrusion of "some of the Jews – Byzantine Jews, such as Mansur ibn Moses, and Mansur ibn al-Khabith," who took sides in an affair regarding the recipient's family.[102] That the aforementioned Byzantine Jews are

[98] M. Zohori, *The Khazars, Their Conversion and Their History in Hebrew Historiographical Literature* (Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1976), 35.

[99] Ashtor, "Quelques observations," 186, arrives at the opposite conclusion on the basis of the fact that Hasdai learned of the Khazars from two individual travelers: "If there were commercial relations between the Spanish Jews and the land of the Khazars, the Jewish dignitary of the Cordovan Caliph would have had better knowledge regarding that kingdom." Lewis, "The Danube Route," 361–2, relates this Eastern European route to the Radhanites, who crossed the region in the ninth century.

[100] A. Gieysztor, "Trade and Industry in Eastern Europe before 1200," in *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol. II, *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. Postan and E. Miller (Cambridge, 1987), 488–91. In Bodleian 2862.26, fols. 71a–72, the community of Salonica received a Jewish visitor from Russia. That this Jewish man was not merely a Jewish traveler in Russia, but rather a resident of that country, is evident in the fact that he spoke Russian, apparently to the exclusion of Hebrew and other languages. Moreover, if indeed limited to Russian, then the fact that the Jews of Salonica were able to communicate with him reveals that Russian-speaking Jews already lived in the Greek port city. See Mann, *Jews*, II, 192 and Starr, *JBE*, pp. 171–2; A. Marmorstein, "Nouveaux renseignements sur Tobiya ben Eliézer," *REJ* 73 (1921): 92–7. Starr, 172, disagrees with Marmorstein, who argues that this was written by Tobias b. Eliezer. Another letter, T-S 20.45, also refers to Russian Jewish traders in Byzantium: Mann, *Texts*, I, 48–51, cf. 45–57 and II, 1458.

On the connections between Byzantium and Khazaria in the tenth century, see Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 56–65, §9–11.

[101] On the Radhanites, see Ibn Khordadhbeh, *Kitâb al-Masâlik*, VI, 114. On the Hungarian connection in the capital, see Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, 12 (Eng.), 14 (Heb.); see, on the northern market sphere of Byzantium, Abulafia, "Asia," 419.

[102] Gottheil and Worrell, *Fragments*, 54–5, ll. 3–7.

traders is not certain, but the other protagonists of the letter, totally immersed in the commercial community, present a probable scenario in which itinerant or resident Byzantine merchants intervened in a local Cairene dispute.[103] Equally noteworthy is the fact that men bearing patently Arabic names should be considered Byzantine, indicating a fluidity of population that only reinforced their economic potential.

Other documents describe businessmen who criss-crossed the sea and the surrounding lands. One letter from the Genizah, probably of the eleventh century, refers to the sale of hides from Crete to Egypt.[104] Presumably also in the eleventh or twelfth century, an Egyptian Jew named Mufarraj took a business trip that included Byzantium. Isaac Hazzan al-Fasi writes from Damascus, recounting how a third party, Ali b. Yefet ha-Levi, had praised the recipient, Abraham, for the kindness which he had shown Ali's brother, Mufarraj, "on his way from Byzantium."[105] A variety of other examples, already brought to bear in the exposition of Byzantine-Jewish trade, amply confirm both the vitality of Byzantine-Jewish international trade in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the interconnectedness of Arabic speakers and Greek speakers in a period of great movement of goods and people.

Perhaps most compellingly, but not without evidentiary problems, Benjamin's *Itinerary* itself represents growth in the Jewish mercantile network of the twelfth century. Zvi Ankori has proposed the theory – and it is admittedly an inferred one – that the purpose of the *Itinerary* was to fill a commercial need.[106] The Jews of Spain and elsewhere, according to Ankori, needed a mercantile handbook of the Jewish Mediterranean, and Benjamin provided it.[107] Unfortunately, Benjamin did not leave an explicit statement of purpose, so we are left with modern interpretations, but Ankori's goes a

[103] Naturally, other evidence from the Genizah demonstrates thriving Byzantine activity on the north–south axis of the eastern Mediterranean. From the multiple cases of redemption of Byzantine Jews in Alexandria (see above, chap. 3, nn. 104, 114 and 191), to a business letter to Crete (see above, chap. 2, n. 169), the Genizah leaves no doubt as to the traffic across the sea. At the same time, the Jews of the region were widely dispersed, such that it is no surprise to find Byzantine Jews living in Egypt, and vice versa.

[104] De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 22. Van Doorninck, "Byzantine Shipwrecks," 902, notes "a substantial increase in tenth- and eleventh-century maritime commerce," as measured by the frequency of shipwrecks.

[105] ENA 4020, f. 24, in Mann, *Jews*, I, 104; II, 113–14, 11. 20–4.

[106] Z. Ankori, "Viajando con Benjamin de Tudela," *Actas del III congreso internacional, Encuentro de las tres culturas*, ed. C. Carrete Parrondo (Toledo, 1988), 11–28.

[107] Ibid. Ankori's argument does not relate, of course, to the great migration of Spanish Jews to the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, but rather to their commercial dealings with the eastern Mediterranean during the Commercial Revolution; see J. Hacker, "The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth Century," in *Moreshet Sepharad*, ed. H. Beinart (1992) vol. II, 109–33.

long way to making sense of Benjamin's work on its own terms. And if correct, it only furthers the notion of expanding Jewish mercantile interests, in which the Byzantine Jews figured quite prominently.

In opposition to this view, David Abulafia describes the decline of Jewish trade in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, particularly in Egypt. He outlines the upheavals that took place in this period, and these surely took their toll. But Abulafia also claims that "the ancient ties between the Egyptian Jews and their co-religionists – even blood relations – in each corner of the Mediterranean were shattered by catastrophic events in the West."[108] Indeed, the onset of the thirteenth century does witness the beginning of a rupture between Egyptian and European Jewry, as both began a period of comparative contraction, in the face of multiple pressures. Not least of all, the Genizah sources dry up in the thirteenth century. This contraction, however, only really takes hold with the onset of the thirteenth century, when both European and Islamicate Jewry tended to turn into themselves, subject to increasing social and economic challenges. The collected evidence from Byzantium and Egypt in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, seems to undermine Abulafia's claim; Jews continued their interactions through the twelfth century, not only westward from Byzantium, but also north- and southward.

FROM THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Pirenne and Ashtor perceive two distinct stages of Jewish commercial development: supremacy until the mid tenth century and decline thereafter. But the drastic break they imagine exaggerates both stages; the Jews appear unduly powerful prior to the Commercial Revolution, and this supremacy only serves to highlight that which seems to be a collapse. In fact, divested of their dominance in the earlier period and rehabilitated from their presumed debility in the Commercial Revolution, the Jews now appear more consistently as a trading group equipped to thrive under various conditions. A glimpse forward into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries seems to confirm the viability of Jewish commerce, as it reveals a marriage of interests between the Byzantine Jews and the Italian Maritimes, and the flourishing of both.[109]

That the Venetians were at home with the use of agents from other national and ethnic groups is evident from the fact that Venetian protection

[108] Abulafia, "Asia, Africa and the Trade of Medieval Europe," 432.
[109] Dagron, "The Urban Economy," 403–5.

did not depend on nationality (understood as subjecthood to a given polity), but on commercial and legal status. Naturally then, Jews too, pursued Venetian and other city-states' legal protection in order to prosecute their trade.[110] Equally significantly, Venice built its commercial empire in a manner surprisingly analogous to that of the Jews. Using agents, protégés and subjects to carry on the business of trade from the Levant, Venice developed, like the Jews, a network of depositories and transit stops that facilitated their exploits. The Jews could not rival the mercantile, military and political power of the Venetians, but they clearly offered valuable services to to the city-state (and its rivals).[111] Thus, it comes as no surprise that subsequent centuries found the Jews not overrun by, but rather utterly – and formally – integrated into, the Venetian network.[112] Furthermore, the locus of this cooperation was the Byzantine city, where the concentration of wealth and consumption combined to perpetuate the conditions that helped to bring the Jews and Venetians to the urban centers in the first place, not least of all in the textile market.[113]

The complete picture of the Byzantine-Jewish economy therefore depicts Byzantine Jewry as part of the Commercial Revolution, benefiting from its expansion, even if Venice and other Italian city-states gained the lion's share of the markets. From this perspective, the competition so frequently cited hides two basic facts: first, there was much cooperation behind that competition, and second, Venice's increased market share did not diminish the Jews', because the entire market so drastically expanded. In fact, if anything, the Jews benefited from Venice's expansion, just as the empire itself did – at least in the urban economies. Indeed, if the picture of the Byzantine-Jewish presence in international trade and textiles between the seventh and twelfth centuries exhibits continuity in character, it nevertheless evinces a shift in intensity – in the opposite direction from that proposed by Pirenne and championed by Ashtor. It appears that in the period of Byzantine crisis, following the rise of Islam, the Byzantine-Jewish economy stagnated or contracted, in a manner similar to that of the empire in which they lived.[114] Though stable in their primary commitment to textiles and hides, the Jewish position changed and improved with the expanding political and

[110] Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 59, 110.

[111] D. Abulafia, "The Levant Trade of the Minor Cities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: Strengths and Weaknesses," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 22 (1988): 185, 189–90; Jacoby, "Les Génois," 245, 259–60.

[112] K.-P. Matschke, "The Late Byzantine Urban Economy, Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries," in *EHB*, 475; Constable, *Housing the Stranger*, 286.

[113] Matschke, "The Late Byzantine Urban Economy," 465, 474; Magdalino, *Manuel I*, 144–5.

[114] Bouras, "Aspects of the Byzantine City," 501; Laiou, "Exchange and Trade," 697–9.

economic fortunes of the empire – and those of the eastern Mediterranean in general – from the late tenth to twelfth centuries. When Venice came to control Mediterranean commerce, they found a well-oiled Jewish mercantile machine, which at first they viewed as competition, but which later they learned to co-opt.[115]

[115] Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, passim; D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 41–2. The Venetians were guaranteed access to Byzantine markets with the chrysobull of 992, issued by Basill II. It excluded Jews, among others, from Venetian boats trading with Byzantium. Nicol points out that the Amalfitans, who were restricted from Venetian–Byzantine trading in the same clause as the Jews, clearly posed the threat of competition. By analogy, it becomes clear that the Jews did so as well.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion: a new perspective on Byzantine economic history

It cannot be said of Byzantine Jewry that it brought the greatest of influences to bear in the Mediterranean world; nor can it be said, however, that the experience of this community and the force of its presence are accurately reflected in the comparatively few and widely dispersed sources. One can only gauge the impact of this small community, less than one percent of the population of the Byzantine Empire, by extrapolating a larger picture from the assemblage of documents, chronicles, epitaphs, religious literature, responsa and legal compilations that constitute the currently known body of primary sources. And economic history, though only one of many possible approaches to the interpretation of this corpus, brings certain key aspects of the Byzantine-Jewish experience into stark relief, and, it is hoped, it serves an important function in the painting of that larger picture. In tracing the allocation of Byzantine-Jewish resources across languages, religious affiliations and countries, economic history helps to clarify this minority's place in the constellation of contemporary Jewish cultures, the Byzantine Empire and the eastern Mediterranean at large. Avoiding comparison to the more prolific and better-preserved cultures of Spain, Baghdad and continental Europe, this methodological point of departure allows us to admit a correlation between paucity of sources and relative cultural influence, without then deducing, in wholesale fashion, a lack of significance.

The present analysis of Byzantine Jewish economic history points to three broad conclusions. First, the economy of the Jews, naturally and on its own terms, broke down into two components: the segregated and the integrated. It seems clear that the Jews and the non-Jewish powers alike distinguished synagogue donations and the redemption of captives, for example, from their role in the Byzantine silk market. Still, despite this distinction, the two economies fueled one another, and lead to the second conclusion: the segregated economy of the Jews served purely Jewish functions and gave concrete terms to the concept Jewish life, but it also doubled as the primary tool for developing the integrated facet of their

economy. That the Theban silk industry, for example, or at least one central component of it, lay simultaneously at the center of the local economy and largely in the hands of the city's Jews, illustrates this point of intersection. Finally, this capacity to harness internal economic resources and to translate them to the markets of the Mediterranean economy resulted in the third conclusion: Byzantine Jewry did not suffer from the rise of Venice and the onset of the Commercial Revolution; rather, it capitalized on it.

The broader implications of these conclusions manifest themselves somewhat differently for the respective historical perspectives of Byzantium and medieval Judaism. The commercial economy of the Byzantine Empire never approached the magnitude of its agricultural economy, which occupied not only the bulk of the population, but also made its way into the imperial military organization – the other great economic motor of the empire – in the form of military landholdings. Nonetheless, in the economic realm of textiles and tanning, the Jews, relying on their self-referential infrastructure, figure surprisingly prominently. And although Byzantinists generally appreciate this Jewish role, especially since the major translations of Cairo Genizah material have become available, the intrinsically Jewish component of that contribution, i.e., the reliance on internal structures, has gone largely unnoticed. Also from the point of view of Byzantine history, the internal Jewish economy and its utility in creating a niche within the greater Byzantine one speaks directly to the nature of Jewish autonomy in the Byzantine Empire. This significant, functional autonomy colors, in turn, our understanding of Judaism as a Roman minority, which enjoyed ancient legitimacy that was not easily undermined, even when under ideological attack. It might be reasonably said that the complexity of the Jewish corporate identity as a genuinely Byzantine minority takes shape in its economic history, and the comparison of that perspective with the literary–cultural one promises interesting and, I believe, surprisingly consistent conclusions about the place of the Jews in Byzantine society.

From the perspective of Jewish history, the economic history of its Byzantine contingent counts as yet another node in the network of Jewish life in the Mediterranean. Not only did Byzantine Jews attract Egyptian and Palestinian coreligionists to their shores for the purpose of study and profit, but they also sent their talented students to those other countries, to study at the feet of the great masters. In addition, captives were constantly redeemed on both the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, such that human and financial capital constantly crossed the sea in an ongoing web of interrelationships. That these investments, including donations, should also reflect Talmudic alignment does not surprise. On this account, the

Byzantine-Jewish scholarly universe demands recognition as being broad and deep enough to sustain a dual orientation, as did the Jews of Egypt, for example. Certainly the Jews of Byzantium enjoyed the economic means to maintain this level of academic excellence. Finally, if we remember the centrality of Byzantium in the silk trade at large, we may deduce that the Jews must have played an important role among their coreligionists in the Mediterranean, even though the Cairo Genizah's prime orientation is towards Egypt and North Africa. In short, Constantinople, Thebes, Otranto, Bari, Attaleia and Salonica, to name a few cities, were points of reference for contemporary Jews in Byzantium, Palestine, Egypt and Iraq alike, and economic history compellingly draws the precise lines of communication and exchange that bound them together.[1]

ECONOMIC HISTORY AS A MEASURE OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Beyond the direct historical implications of this study for the respective realms of Byzantium and Judaism, Byzantine-Jewish economic history also addresses larger questions of social history in general, and calls into question some basic assumptions that frequently guide historical research. In this vein, I have argued that the experience of the Jews and their economic pursuits challenge the inverse relationship that is assumed to characterize segregation and integration. The Jews of Byzantium, to judge by the nature of their taxation as Byzantine subjects in contrast to their exclusion from the Constantinopolitan guilds, and as evinced by the synergy of their segregated and integrated economies, require a different model for understanding the nature of their relationship to the majority society. It seems that the two impulses of segregation and integration do not always fall neatly on two sides of a scale, in which one rises as the other falls. In place of that image, I have proposed the biological metaphor of the cell, according to which a minority segregates itself for the dual purpose of organizing itself internally and mustering strength to meet with, contribute to and benefit from the majority culture on the latter's terms. More pointedly, like the cell, a minority actually needs to cordon itself off, in order to be able to serve its function within the larger society. Like the semipermeable membrane of the cell, that barrier is also a bridge.

The problem such as I have attempted to pose it, however, actually rests on a prior step of reasoning. The course of Byzantine-Jewish history raises a

[1] For Attaleia, Thebes and Corinth, see Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 213–15.

more basic problem, namely, the historical categorization of Jews as "Byzantine" in the first place. Distinct sets of characteristics bring the Jews of Byzantium under the umbrellas of both points of reference, Jewish and Byzantine, but crucially, the two sets are neither parallel, nor even in relationship to one another at all. In other words, that which renders the Jews Byzantine is neither analogous to, complementary to nor competing with that which makes them Jewish. To wit: The demography and trade of Byzantine Jewry – particularly in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when it included Khazars, Arabic speakers, Greek speakers, Venetian and Genoese subjects, Rabbanites, Karaites and adherents of both the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds – resulted in a community so heterogeneous on so many different axes, that its Byzantine quality is difficult to discern. Was the Egyptian doctor who settled in Seleucia, but who still spoke Arabic, Byzantine?

The sources do not answer this question neatly, so historians inevitably impose a few, general criteria that might reasonably define someone or something as Byzantine or otherwise. Even if historians do not claim to divine one's privately experienced sense of self, we nonetheless arrogate to ourselves the right to place those people and events within the sphere of a given history – in this case, that of Byzantium. I have followed the implicit criteria of my colleagues and predecessors in this field, and have considered residence in Byzantine territory, or cultural, linguistic or familial roots in Byzantine society, to qualify a Jew as Byzantine. Though I have invoked the *Graecitas* of Byzantine Jewry as the cultural analogue to the economic marriage of integration and segregation, this heterogeneity demonstrates that *Romanitas* does not apply to all Jews. It does, however, underlie the legal status of all resident Jews, with at least some traceable implications in their position as taxpayers. Meanwhile, the antagonism that lurks in the Byzantine Orthodox imagination of the Jew is irreducibly *religious*. Consequently, the national and cultural variety of Byzantine Jewry does not seem to have colored their conceptual place in the Byzantine mosaic, itself quite diverse. If, then, it may be argued that these criteria (residence or acculturation) meet a reasonable standard for describing the Jewish community as "Byzantine," it is nevertheless also true that these criteria do not look anything like the criteria which define membership in the Jewish people.

The definition of those who fall under the heading of Jewish history poses almost no methodological problems. The Jews defined themselves as such, both explicitly, implicitly and on their own terms, so that we perceive an historical class that does not demand scholarly artifice to make it coherent.

Birth, language and religion coalesced in the collective consciousness to define the community that understood itself as Jewish. Nor does the fact of variety within that overarching category similarly pose any problems to the modern historian, again, because that variety did not pose any problems of definition to the Jews of the day. This is not to say that medieval Jewry ignored or suppressed difference; it simply enjoyed the benefit of a virtually universal, and relatively flexible, self-definition that embraced a great deal of cultural, linguistic and even doctrinal variety within its fold. Similarly, even though marginal groups that genuinely defy easy categorization did exist, such as the Samaritans, the indisputable fact of their marginality – in both statistical and ideological terms – if anything, demonstrates the validity of the normative, contemporary criteria for defining the Jewish people. With the Jews of the Middle Ages, the exceptionality of the margins proves the rule of the center.

Economic history captures this variety-within-unity of Judaism in a number of ways. Byzantine Jewry engaged, on a large scale, in only a few, interrelated trades, most importantly, textiles and hides, which they pursued across the centuries. Meanwhile, their allocation of resources for purely Jewish purposes, such as scholarship, charity, communal funds, etc., crisscrossed the empire and the eastern Mediterranean in every direction, both geographical and ideological, without ever belying its basic, Jewish quality. Perhaps the most pithy and moving example, the Rabbanite redemption of Karaite captives, proves this unity beyond a doubt.[2] In short, we can discern patterns from within the complexity of the Jews' economy that reaffirm the relatively unambiguous national and religious criteria by means of which the Jews identified themselves, relieving us from extended theorizing on the nature of Jewish identity.

This discrepancy, or asymmetry, between the Byzantine and Jewish facets of that which we call "Byzantine Jewry" complicates even further the concept of integration and segregation, since the points of reference do not submit to the same standards of definition. This asymmetry logically derives from an underlying condition that may apply to diasporic minorities in general. While autochthonous minorities may experience tension with the majorities among whom they live, both parties acknowledge a common point of geographical reference. Insofar as they share a region or country, the competing minority and majority claims for it may wax all the more violent, but these tensions are quite different from those of a diasporic minority. A minority in diaspora must define itself not only in relation to its

[2] See above, chap. 2, n. 205.

country of residence, but also in relation to its place and people of origin, thereby multiplying the factors that set the tone for the minority–majority relationship. The nature of Jewish taxation in the empire illustrates this problem particularly well. To all appearances, the juridical status of the Jews was not exceptional, and they were taxed accordingly. It also appears, however, that they were subject to a minor, but collective and discriminatory tax. What is more, even if such a tax did not exist, the corporate, minority identity of the Jews occasionally lent itself to a neutrally valorized collectivization of taxation, a fact that partially challenges the notion that the Jews were subjects like any others.[3] All the while, the Jews routinely remitted tax-like donations to the major academies in Baghdad and Palestine. Perhaps the practical and economic implications of the ambivalence and complexity of the Byzantine-Jewish constituency may serve, however imperfectly, as a case for comparison to similar historical problems among other peoples and periods.

PROFESSIONS CONSPICUOUS BY THEIR ABSENCE

In more practical terms, the economic history of the middle period presents certain key differences from the periods before and after it, which merit mention. Most notable is the absence of the Jews from certain trades in which they either had participated previously or would do so elsewhere in later centuries. Even taking into account the incompleteness of the record and the inherent weakness of an argument *ex silentio*, one cannot help but notice the total lack of references to the Jews in a number of major economic enterprises.[4] Of course, a certain breadth of activity necessarily occupied the Jews, such as glassblowing, metalwork, pottery, carpentry, etc., even though the sources be almost silent or, indeed, entirely so. *Modo grosso*, however, the Jews are conspicuously absent in the realms of slaveholding and slave trading, logging and mining, and moneylending.[5]

In the early Byzantine period, slaveholding and the slave trade still occupied Jews, whereas by the time of the Islamic conquest, barriers to Jewish involvement successfully dislodged them from that lucrative trade. Even during the early period, the extent of the Jewish involvement in the slave trade poses many problems, especially since, as with moneylending,

[3] Laiou, "Institutional Mechanisms," 168–71.

[4] J.-M. Martin and G. Noyé, "Les villes de l'Italie byzantine," in *Hommes et richesses*, ed. C. Abadie-Reynal *et al.*, II, 58.

[5] Z. Ankori, "Greek Orthodox–Jewish Relations in Historic Perspective: the Jewish View," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 13 (1976): 30.

the primary points of historical comparison have been – erroneously – Western and Central Europe.[6] In any case, the middle period presents no such problems. Absolutely no reference to Jewish slave trade enters the record, with the exception of reflexively repeated, antiquated imperial legislation penalizing Jews who had engaged in the trade or conversion of slaves and sometimes simply in slaveholding. As far as the Byzantine legal prohibitions are concerned, every single one of them was copied from the Codes of Theodosian and Justinian, with no applicability to the Middle Byzantine period. Indeed, the sources lead to the inevitable conclusion that at some point, the cost-to-benefit ratio of the slave trade made it impracticable by Jews; either exacting legislation or other economic considerations succeeded in wiping out any Byzantine-Jewish slave trade by the time of Heraclius and probably before him. In the only possible exception, it is unclear to what degree the Radhanite merchants actually traded in slaves in Byzantine territory; since Ibn Kordadhbeh keeps his peace about their practice of that trade in the empire itself and among Byzantine subjects.[7]

Mining and logging constituted undertakings essential to the Byzantine state, not only for the obvious utility of the resultant materials in everyday life, but also in the arms industry.[8] Since Antiquity, the forests of the Black Sea had provided the wood for ships, and the mines of Asia Minor the metals for weapons and treasure. Those regions continued to supply these materials for the Roman Empire of the Middle Ages, with its insatiable appetite for gold and its heavy investment in the military. With the improbable exception of the Edessan Jew's purchase of the scrap metal from the Colossus of Rhodes in the seventh century, which in any case took place under the occupation of the Muslims, no Jews are mentioned in regard to the timber or mining industries.[9] It is worthy of note that their absence in these essential markets has constituted part of the Pirenne thesis of Jewish decline, especially in light of the Venetian undertaking in precisely this trade.[10] Never having gained a foothold in these industries, however, the Jews' absence from them during later centuries hardly counts as economic contraction.

Raising a completely different set of historical questions, scholars have contrasted the Jews of Byzantium to those of Western Europe in regard to

[6] Toch, "Jews of Europe," 39–63. [7] Abulafia, "Asia," 416.
[8] See K.-P. Matschke, "Mining," in *EHB*, 115–20.
[9] L. I. Conrad, "The Arabs and the Colossus," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, ser. 3, 6/2 (1996): 165–88.
[10] Pirenne, *Economic and Social History*, 17.

moneylending.[11] It is true that the Jews played no role of note in that service, but the comparison is ill-conceived in the first place for the middle period. In Western Europe, the Jews did not become prominent moneylenders until the twelfth century (and even then only in certain places), that is, until the very end of the middle period in Byzantium. During the bulk of the Middle Byzantine period, therefore, Jews did not engage in moneylending on any large scale, anywhere in Christendom. In any case, the Byzantine government itself alternately prohibited, allowed and regulated interest rates and moneylending, keeping its governance out of private hands altogether. Only in the late Byzantine period do we find Jews as moneylenders, as we do in the well-known examples of French-, German- and Italian-speaking Europe.[12]

The primary lesson to be gleaned from these negative examples is the fact of Jewish economic focus. As a small minority in a great empire, the Jews sought to remain as cohesive as possible, by concentrating on those few industries in which they could best succeed. Their long history in the fields of textiles and tanning rendered the choice a natural one; it would simply contravene all logic for them to branch out into unknown markets, which would only disperse their resources. When we do find Jews among a range of professions, we must rely on the distribution of the evidence for guidance. That is, we assume that the relative dominance of textiles and tanning in the sources accurately reflects, in rough proportionality, their actual activities. Still, the communal economy needed purveyors of and traders in bread, wine and real property, meaning that while they might not merit consideration in the great scale of the Byzantine economy, these rarer professions surely played some difficult-to-measure, but appreciable, part in the purely Jewish one.

THE PROMISE OF BYZANTINE-JEWISH HISTORY

As the problem of the more elusive trades demonstrates, the promise of Byzantine-Jewish history is limited, but it is also distinct. Even though it is not central to the many streams of Mediterranean Jewish history, the Byzantine chapter of that larger history developed at one of its crossroads, and no Jewish history is complete without it. The Byzantine experience in Judaism fills out the picture of Mediterranean Jewry in the richness of its

[11] Ankori, *Encounter*, 28–9.

[12] Jewish moneylending did appear in the fifteenth century: Matschke, "The Late Byzantine Urban Economy," 474.

constituent cultures and languages, while, conversely, the Jewish experience colors Byzantine history by revising our understanding of the regional commercial economy. Thus, the Jews belong squarely in the story of Byzantine trade, even if our impressions of their impact owe much to the relative scantiness of trade in the first place; if nothing else, certainly the Byzantines themselves noticed them. By implicitly challenging the guild system, the Jews cast a harsh light on the strengths and weakness of that organization. And by virtue of their economic and communal autonomy, the Jews help modern scholarship to define contemporary terms of ethnic and minority self-determination with more precision, in an otherwise highly centralized and bureaucratized society. In the radical changes of the Commercial Revolution, Byzantine-Jewish economic growth insists that the Jewish infrastructure was supple and efficient enough to expand together with the market itself. Finally, at the broadest level, the Jews of Byzantium provide a concrete and discrete example of how minorities negotiate with majority culture, and how that negotiation takes on internal and external characteristics.

Appendix A: MS translations

T-S 13 J 11.4[1]

RECTO

1 Peace from on high and blessings that [flourish] like the grass of the hills,[2]
like drops from Heaven and the fishes of the depths.
2 Strength and vigor, grace, lovingkindness and mercy, and long life, like
the father of the multitude who lived a full life[3]
3 and like him who was bound on the mountain supernal,[4] and like Jacob, a
man of perfection and a dreamer of dreams, and like him who sprinkles
its blood
4 seven times.[5] May all blessings come and occur, be bound unto and set
upon, the heads of my brothers
5 Mar Solomon and Abu Sa'id, gentle and deeply missed brothers, from
me, Maliha, your sister,
6 and my small daughter who is called Zoë,[6] who pays her respects to you.
We are alive, and they have assured me by
7 the Rock of our redemption that you are, too, in happiness without
mishap, rejoicing without pressures, in contentedness
8 and advantage, without sorrow or lament. Would that I could write you
that I am well, but I am not well,

[1] The text is fully edited by Mann, *Jews*, II, 306–7, to which I offer only minor emendations, which can be addressed in the notes without a full transcription. Starr, *JBE*, 214 only translated it partially, hence the present complete translation.

[2] Elliptical reference to the saying "Men are like the plants of the field: some wither and some flourish," Eruv. 54a.

[3] I.e., Abraham, in reference to his name-change from Abram, Gen. 17:5.

[4] Isaac.

[5] Mann, *Jews*, II, 306, in his notes to this line, prefers to reconstruct the virtually illegible last word as דם, quoting from Lev. 16:14. I see a מ at the beginning of this difficult word, probably, therefore, a near-quote from Lev. 4:6 שבע פעמים והזה מן-הדם.

[6] זוֹאי = ζωή.

9 because at this moment, I'll tell you, my soul is restless in my heart, my step has faltered,[7] my bones
10 tremble,[8] and my strength has melted away, for I have been separated from you now a number of years. Great is
11 my yearning to see you face to face, and I would run at the pace of a lion
12 and rush [to see you]. Indeed I say, "Would that I had the wings of a dove,"[9] that I might take wing and be rejoined with
13 my brothers and our master the fourth.[10] But I am not able [to go] because the time is not right.
14 In fact, I recently arranged to go with certain people, but I consulted the Torah scroll, and
[margin]: my luck came up poor, such that I did not[11] succeed [in realizing my plans],
15 and I could not go with them. For Heaven's sake, do you not see the men of the communities
16 of Greece?[12] When members of their [community] are captured, their relatives go [after them] to redeem them. So,
17 why does not one of you take his life into his own hands to come to me and take me [back], for I will not
18 put myself in anyone else's hands to return. Now, why should I go alone? While I
19 remain here, the Lord does not deny me my needs, but if I should go there [alone] and something should befall me
20 of an evil nature, better I should die. Now, I have known you since you were young
21 … merchandise and come here to Romania
22 … and one of you could take merchandise[13]

VERSO [ADDRESS, TWO COLUMNS]

May this letter arrive in happiness and joy to those honorable men of great holiness,[14] my dear brothers Abu Sa'id and Solomon
From me, your sister known as Maliha

[7] II Sam. 22:37. [8] Jer. 23:9. [9] Ps. 55:7.
[10] A reference to a person of rank, specifically, the "fourth" in the חבורה/*havurah*, i.e. the community hierarchy. See discussion above, chap. 3, n. 92.
[11] Mann, *Jews*, II, 307, emends the margin from אני to איני, which is reasonable, given the context.
[12] רומניאה, i.e., European Byzantium.
[13] Lines 23–5 have only a single word or fragment at the far left of each line. Respectively (and dubiously): שלו (= his); תמו; and לעד (= forever).
[14] ככוד גדולת קדושת = כג"ק, see Mann, *Jews*, II, 383.

T-S 10 J 27.8[1]

RECTO

1 the love …[2]
2 us the sea …[3]
3 all of us in Alexandr[ia] …[4]
4 their women, because they lacked the strength[5]
5 and when our captors and our scoffers saw that they were unable …, then the first barrier was breached; they laid us out[6]
6 in the market and we were sold for 40 gold pieces, [and] for 50, 70, 87 and 100 to the Muslims
7 and to the Chr[istia]ns. We remained in the custody of those who bought us for about five days, after which the heads of the [Jewish] community approached in bitter tears and supplicated[7]
8 before the [leader]s[8] of the city. God, who succors, helped them [i.e., the Jewish supplicants]. However, they were forced to return us to the brigands. Then the pirates, on account of the depth of
9 their anger, said they would kill us, and they acted very cruelly towards us. The tied our hands behind us so tightly that blood spilled from
10 our arms. They bound our legs together in irons and beat us mercilessly. Then came the heads of the [Jewish] community and took us on
11 the following condition: If they [i.e., the representatives of the community] did not pay the money by a certain time, they would return us to them [i.e., the pirates]. So, our masters, lift up your eyes to the Holy One, Blessed be He,
12 and have mercy on us and save our lives from the sword, for the pirates who seized us cannot take us

[1] From the period of the Nagid Judah b. Sa'adiah, i.e., shortly after 1065; edited in Mann, *Jews*, II, 364–5, and partially trans. by Starr, *JBE*, 201.

[2] Only האה followed by the base of the ב are visible. Neither Mann nor Starr ventures a guess for this word.

[3] Spelled out in Judeo-Greek, הפילגוס, i.e., ὁ πέλαγος.

[4] Neither Mann nor Starr included this word, of which the letters באליכסנד are visible.

[5] Starr picks up the translation on the following line.

[6] The last word on the line is rendered by Mann as והביאונו, which Starr follows in translating as: "They brought us." Mann acknowledges the difficulty of the reading, which does not account for a letter between the ה and the ב. I suggest the verb והרביצונו, which accounts for what could be a ר or a ל in between. The problem with this reading is that the צ is difficult (whereas Mann's א is less so), and the meaning is no better than Mann's.

[7] Difficult reading, although Mann's reconstruction, which I follow, is plausible.

[8] Mann reconstructs this word, of which only the final י remains, as ראשי. The hole which removed the letters, however, is too small for the full word hypothesized by Mann. So, I suggest the word שרי, which similarly refers to the leaders of Alexandria.

13 and sell us elsewhere, because they have a band prepared to go to plunder in the land of Greece, and the strength of this community is already diminished
14 and they cannot even attend to our sus[ten]ance. Meanwhile, the brigands have promised that, come the time, they will either cut off our heads before
15 the community, or they will sell us to the Christians or Muslims.[9] Therefore, our Masters, make every effort on our behalf, according to your noble
16 custom, for God's sake, lest we die and the barrier be breached. Do not give up on us, rather hurry and save us[10]

MARGIN

For there is no help or support except the Holy One, Blessed be He, and you, for the Lord does not withhold the wages of any one who does …

VERSO [ADDRESS, TWO COLUMNS]

… ryah, the honorable R.[11] Bir … shalom / Eliah VRZYDS[12] … / [Ger]shom the younger, son of R. Is[rael][13]

May this letter be brought to the honorable man of holiness[14] our teacher and master, Judah, head of the community and prince of the treasured nation / … son of the honorable man of holiness, our teacher and master, Sa'adyah (may his soul be bound in the bond of life) עשכשצבש[15]

T-S 13 J 20.25[1]

RECTO

1 … take it from him just as your relative Yibqi b. 'Abu Razin took [him]
2 … rather 250 gold pieces, which he sent, and he took them

[9] Here, Starr's translation ends.
[10] Mann reads the last word of the recto as את סיעתנו, but it is too difficult to justify. I prefer והושיעינו.
[11] Mann transcribes ברב, although כרב is clear. [12] Apparently וורזידס, Βράσιδας.
[13] Abbreviated: יש. [14] כבוד גק. [15] To Mann, as to me, this acronym is not clear.
[1] Published by Mann, *Jews*, II, 88. The entire righthand section of the letter is missing, and there is no single point at which the page's width is intact, thus there is no way of determing how many characters are missing from each line, except as we can from the words missing from the quote at the beginning of line 11, אין פודין את … "One does not redeem …" Mann loosely categorizes this MS as referring to Byzantine captivity, primarily because of the reference to a specific pirate, named יבקי בן אבירזין, in the first line, who captured Jews from Attaleia according to Bodl. 2873.28 (MS Heb. a. 3, fol. 28), as described in Mann, *Jews*, I, 88–90, and trans. Starr, *JBE*, 190–1.

3 … news of them, their abuse and hard work. What is more, there is among them a young girl

4 … m[2] for her, so that they not abuse her. We constantly weep about the magnitude of our sins

5 … and we were captured [and taken] from place to place. After all of this we took

6 … [e]lderly and went to his tents, where we stayed in the heat of the day[3] and the frost of the night

7 … on our behalf to him, and we made a request of him. There then passed between us and him [i.e., the pirate, the relative of Yibqi b. Abu Razin] many words

8 … to you from me an Edomite slave[4] who is worth 20 gold pieces, so he brought him[5]

9 "… take your brother and go." We told him that we could do no such thing

10 … [for] we would be incurring a cost prohibited by religious obligation, as our sages taught us:

11 … "[one does not redeem] captives for more than their worth, to avoid encouraging the practice."[6] So, we returned[7] to

12 … we …[8] to our elder, Mar Rav Nathan ha-Kohen, may he live on, and to the rest of the holy congregation

13 … these things.[9] Rav Nathan responded and said, "Let the matter rest until the money arrives …

14 … I will deal in this matter as you wish and according to my ability – may God bring [me] success."

15 … a letter from Mukhtar the Arab,[10] and he said to him[11] that he sent my[12] son Jabarah

[2] Mann reconstructs the fragmentary word on the basis of a difficult final letter, which he reads as ש. However, that single letter cannot be a ש; it is rather a final מ.

[3] Jer. 36:30. Mann's version has a typographical error, rendering this word, clearly יום, as if it were ים.

[4] Here, it seems as though the pirate is offering the Jews some kind of exchange, including a Greek slave.

[5] והביאו which could mean "and they brought," or "and he brought him."

[6] The Talmudic rationale is encapsulated in the phrase, מפני תקון עולם, the spirit of which means, "in order to meet the demands of a situation." See above, sec. chap. 3, n. 102, and J. Git., 4:6.

[7] Following Mann's reconstruction of the the first two letters of the word ושבנו.

[8] I read נו …, which might be read in a number of ways as a pronominal suffix of first-person, plural. Mann reconstructs the partial word as זו, meaning *this*.

[9] Mann reads צלה[ה], here meaning *rescue*, whereas I prefer אלה.

[10] Mentioned in T-S 13 J 14.20 r, line 16, below. [11] Mann reads "to me."

[12] As frequently occurs, the persons got mixed up in the indirect speech. Quoting the words of Muktar b. Jabarah, the author is explaining Mukhtar's letter. In that letter Mukhtar b. Jabarah wrote that he sent sent *his* son, named Jabarah.

16 … the Jews to the region of Barqah, but I will not send them, for your sake
17 … after the entire community, and he recounted the entire story to them, but they said "We cannot
18 …[13] from among the captives for 100 gold pieces, so he sent him responses
19 … "you asked about them, and God will bring success to the endeavor and double his reward."
20 … and they said … their privation, and since the slaves[14]
21 … our weeping on their behalf
22 … to her

T-S 13 J 34.3[1]

1 …
2 these … have been gathered … as per the meaning of the "Refuge
3 and Fortress of the Children of Israel,"[2] victory … [to] the glorious rabbi, great and hearty well-being
4 from God our Rock[3] and from us, in all[4] the holy congregations in No-Amon[5] who take heart,
5 and in her [i.e., Alexandria's] two syna[gogues] therein established, dedicated to their Rock,[6] nev[er distan]ced[7] from the worship of Him
6 nor drawn away from His Unity, even as the persecutors are always agitated, and assaulting[8] them …
7 their eyes grow dim, their spirits beg, they sacrifice their wealth for Him, and to the altars
8 they approach for the slaughter. Were it not for the One revered in the Secret of the Holies, the One who is Sanctified by the choirs of Tarshish,

[13] Mann reconstructs the incomplete first characters as חרים[א], meaning *other* or *others*. I see a ה, not a ח; the letter preceding it does appear to be an א.
[14] Mann reads העברים, meaning the Jews.
[1] Mann, *Jews*, II, 344–5. Starr, *JBE*, 245, included a better edition, though no translation. Mann's categorization of the captives as Byzantine is based on his impression that their place of origin, as he transcribed it from the letter, seems Byzantine. Mann read this place as אסטרבילו, and Starr as אסטצבילו. See images.
[2] Joel 4:16.
[3] Mann reads אלוהים חורב, meaning "the God of Horeb (i.e., Sinai)" and requiring the emendation to אלוהי. I read אלוהים צורנו.
[4] I read בכל; Starr reads the word as בני, "the members of." [5] I.e., Alexandria.
[6] I read the *pu'al* participle, מקודשות, wheras Starr erroneously reads the *hiph'il* participle, מקדישות. Though *yod* and *waw* are often interchangeable in medieval MSS, the admittedly interchangeable letter is here located so that it cannot be the *hiph'il* as per Starr's edition.
[7] Following Mann and Starr. [8] Perhaps מנגשים, "oppressing," or מתגששים, "wrangling."

9 they would despair and withdraw from life, as it is written, "Were it not for the Lord who took our side … , life would swallow us up … "[9]

10 … we constantly ask from God that he improve our lot with the [continued] life of our Master, the Rabbi, and to glorify

11 our time by means of his life; "May he see his progeny and live long; for the purpose of the Lord," as it says, "will succeed at his hands."[10]

12 May he answer the request, in his lovingkindness and faithfulness. The aim of these lines to his magnificence is to info[rm him about]

13 what has occurred in the days since five captives came to us from the land of Strobilos[11] – still

14 lads. They fell into the hands of cruel and violent ones [pirates], who wore us down and afflicted our spirits till they brought us

15 to the brink of death. However, we were helped to deal with them by the governor of the city, but this did not help until [we] bribed [him, lending him] …[12]

16 100 gold pieces with interest. So we took a collection for our purpose from men, women, boys and girls, in g[old, silver]

17 copper, flax, both raw and spun, pillows, cushions and other such things until we accrued one hundred …

18 it was collected openheartedly and out of compassion, and our pr[ayers] are on behalf of those boys …

19 and all the gentiles are amazed by us saying "Blessed is the nation whose lot is thus, blessed is the nation [whose God] is the Lord."[13]

20 They desisted from their business and kept a vigil day and night until they rescued those captives from the hands of the cru[el ones],[14]

21 and our God helped when he saw the fo[rc]e of our de[si]re to save them. We brought them to our neighborhood in j[o]y.

[9] Partial quotes from Ps. 124:2, 3 respectively.

[10] Is. 53:10. Mann and Starr read והוא at the end of the line, but I only see והו, which is too incomplete for me to translate.

[11] One does not expect Strobilos, written here as אסטרבילו, a town in southwest Asia Minor, to be called "the *land of* [ארץ] Strobilos." However, the use of the word "land" to refer a city is not unknown. Cf. the case of Valona, a town in Albania which is referred to (with transposition of letters typical in Hebrew place-names) as both ארץ אלבונא/"the land of ALVONA" (Comp. de Rossi 584 [= 2062], fol. 96r), and מדינת אלבונא/"the metropolis of ALVONA" (Comp. de Rossi 1139 [= 2367], *Hebrew Manuscripts from the Palatine Library*: Exhibition Catalogue [Jerusalem, 1985], 36). For the same usage with the city of Attaleia, see below, T-S 13 J 14.20, n. 7. On the importance of Avlona, Strobilos and Attaleia as Venetian trading posts in the twelfth century, see Lilie, *Handel und Politik*, chap. 2, passim.

[12] Mann and Starr read the last few characters of the line differently from one another; in view of what appears to be a ל there might be a word from the root לוה, as per Mann's version, which, in the *hiph'il*, means "to lend" and flows into the next line.

[13] Ps. 144:15. [14] Following Starr and Mann.

22 Still, our happiness for them was not realized, because the better part of them[15] fell victim to harsh disease, may the Lord he[lp] … [16]

23 … and now w[e] …

Margin: The margin contains a brief text written upside-down in relation to the main text and at a forty-five degree angle. Though difficult to make out, it is clearly a reference to a case in which someone is contesting a levirate marriage. She is a childless widow, whose brother-in-law is obliged to pursue one of two options: either he must marry his sister-in-law and carry on his brother's name by producing children with his widow, or he must practice *halisah*, a legal maneuver whereby the widow frees him of that obligation. It appears that there is an issue of forcing the parties to marry, though it is not clear who is pressuring whom, among the widow, the brother-in-law and the local Jewish authorities.

T-S 12.179[1]

1 In the name of the Merciful One

2 "The lovers of your Torah experience great well-being and suffer no difficulties."[2]

3 Beneficent peace from the Good Master, who forever requites with kindness those who do good. May wishes of peace

4 like rivers all find their way[3] to the honorable man of sanctity, our teacher and master,[4] Aaron the scholar

5 and all those who accompany him; let them receive my greetings and those of the men of this place, my co-citizens[5]

6 [and] relatives as well. May God gather in[6] the dispersed ones of Judah and Israel, to go up to the Temple

7 of His Holiness, to witness the pleasantness of the Lord and to visit his sanctuary.

[15] On paleographical grounds, I prefer Mann's transcription, רובם, to Starr's, which reads כולם, meaning "all of them."

[16] Here Mann seems to have been able to make out more than is visible today, quoting Ps. 107:20: "God will send forth his word and heal them."

[1] Published by S. D. Goitein, "Letters from the Land of Israel in the Period of the Crusades," (Heb.) in *Yerushalayim: Review for Eretz-Israel Research* 2/5 (1955): 69–70. I have very few and minor changes to make to Goitein's edition, but this has not been translated elsewhere, even partially.

[2] Ps. 119:165. [3] Lit. "that end up on the head of."

[4] מר׳ ור׳; Goitein did not print the abbreviation marks, and he skipped the second abbreviation for "our master."

[5] Goitein reads …מיודעי, whereas I suspect מודעי, meaning "my acquaintances" or in some sense a fellow member of a cohort, hence "co-citizens," keeping with the direction of the context, which talks of those known to the author, and indeed, as the next line indicates, his relatives.

[6] "Gather in," overlooked by Goitein.

8 Accept greetings from me, Sa'ad; I want you to know that my[7] soul pines
9 to see your face and to witness your honor, [but] the Holy One, Blessed be He, did n[ot] …
10 and the yoke kept me from going to you; the Lord, Blessed be He, who discerns [man's] intentions …
11 may the Holy One, Blessed be He, show me your face [s]oon …
12 I would not have delayed in writing you at any time, had we not heard that [you fell victim]
13 to the enemy.[8] I was very sorry about that, and only afterwards did I learn t[hat] yo[u are][9]
14 alive. I wrote this letter, and I beg you to respond to it
15 and let me know me how you are doing, about any need you might have and your well-being. I
16 and those of my household are well; nothing weighs on my heart, except … [your distance][10]
17 from me. Now, I have to tell you that your wife is in dire straits with the chi[ldren][11]
18 of yours. It has now been 23 years since you abandoned her; do you not long to s[ee them]?[12]
19 Why do you act thus to your wife and children? Figure out what you must do
20 with your children. You had said, "Inform me of the waters … [13]
21 the Nile, and pay [out my obligations on my behalf]."[14] But bread costs 12 *ratls* …

[7] Following Goitein.
[8] Goitein, who reads אורב , meaning "ambush," but I favor אויב , meaning "enemy."
[9] Following Goitein, who sees תה of the word אתה, whereas I can only make out the ת. In any case, the context makes it probable, if not necessary.
[10] Goitein finishes the line with the reconstructed word ברחקך, meaning "in your distance," of which he considers the initial ב to be clearly discernible. I wonder if the initial letter is a ב at all, since the base is quite removed from the body, and no other ב in the entire letter exhibits this characteristic. That problem leaves the possibility of a ך, which I cannot explain any better.
[11] Goitein sees the whole word, whereas I only see the היל of הילדים. Context bears Goitein's reading out, even in the absence of the whole word.
[12] Goitein transcribes thus: (ותם)לרא, meaning "to see them."
[13] I agree with Goitein who reads the word כבר, meaning "already," at the end of the line (there may be more text after it, but it is unreadable), even though I cannot discern the author's meaning.
[14] Goitein reads והשליכו, meaning "and they cast off/rejected" or, in the plural imperative, "Cast off!" I read והשלים. I chose one of the less common meanings for this form, "to pay," on account of the monetary exchange that appears to be the topic of the line. Typically meaning "fulfill" or "finish," the word may refer to the Nile overflowing.

22 the land of Egypt, and you said that you were ill; may the Holy One, Blessed be He, [grant you]
23 a complete recovery …

MARGIN

two-year-old girl[15]/another, receive greetings/from me, Saʿad/and greetings/ and from your wife/ …

VERSO [ADDRESS, TWO COLUMNS]

May this letter reach Seleucia, the honorable Aaron the scholar, our master and teacher, at the home of Shabbetai, near the synagogue.

From me, Saʿad, your father-in-law.

T-S 13 J 14.20[1]

RECTO

1 Afterwards, his messenger came to the residence of our luminary and reverend, the honorable man of holiness, teacher and rabbi,
2 Nethaniel ha-Kohen, most honored leader and prince, may God sustain him and bless him. And with him was one
3 of the captives [sent] to him as a gift. He received him from him[2] graciously, and then sent
4 his master a gift two and one-half times his value, after which point he sent the other
5 captive to him and he paid him [the standard rate of] $33\frac{1}{3}$ go[ld pieces].
6 Then he sheltered, clothed and gave the two of them provisions for the road and sent them on their way, after he had given them the fare
7 for the passage. They set off for their land, happy and light of heart, on account of all the kindnesses that he bestowed
8 upon them. He did n[ot] burden the community on their account – not even for a single loaf of bread. So we augmented
9 our prayers before the Lord on his behalf, in the presence of the entire community, even though we, in the process, placed an obligation
10 on ourselves to pray for him every week in the two synagogues, in public,[3]

[15] בת שתים; Goitein only reads בת שת.

[1] Published by Mann, *Jews*, II, 87; and partially translated by Starr, *JBE*, 186.

[2] Probably the pirate's messenger. Mann reads מי[די]נו, although I do not see how that reading is possible; indeed ממנו seems relatively clear.

[3] Perhaps, "standing up," as per the ritual requirements during the more significant prayers.

as per our statutes. But, let us not neglect the praise also due to the head [of the community], our teacher and master, David ha-Levi
the elder of the generation, the magnificent prince, the glory of the two groups,[4] the son of the honorable R. Isaac, may he rest in peace. May God
in his lovingkindness hear our prayers on their behalf, for they are as two lights in our land as well as in
yours. May the Lord sustain them and [heap][5] grace upon their grace and honor upon their honor.
Now, it happened after this that news arrived of the departure of a ship belonging to of one of the Arabs.
named Jabarah b. Mukhtar,[6] and on it were ten Jews from the land of Attaleia.[7]
It had come to the place known as Ramadah,[8] while sailing westward. We did not believe the news
until their letter came to us and to the elder, our noble teacher and master Nethaniel ha-Kohen,
[may he live] on.[9] They said in it that they are ten [captives] and that much wealth was taken from them. Much
have we cried for them, saying "Alas! What have our sins caused and our iniquities set in motion,

[4] פאר שתי הפאות, lit. "the two corners," refers to the two synagogues. They may refer to: (1) the two principal academies in the Babylonian tradition, Sura and Pumbedita; (2) the Karaites and Rabbanites, as posited by Mann, *Jews*, I, 90, or (3) two local synagogues of the Babylonian and Palestinian rite, respectively, as implied by the reference on line 10: "*the* two synagogues."

[5] Mann reconstructs יוסיפה על. The meaning of the text is clearly something synonymous with or approximating יסף, meaning "to add to," but I am not sure if it would fit as Mann has it. The one clear letter could easily be the left-hand half of a מ or perhaps an ע.

[6] Referred to above, T-S 13 J 20.25, line 15.

[7] אנטאליה. The problem here is the term "land," which seems to imply a location larger than a city. However, Joshua Starr, "The Place-Name 'Italiya-Antaliyah," 475–8, convincingly argues for understanding this term as the city Attaleia. The pronunciation reflected in this Hebrew spelling is also reflected in both the modern Turkish name for the city, *Antalya*, as well as attested ancient spellings. The word does not appear to refer to the peninsula of Asia Minor, called *Anatolia* in ancient and modern languages, because, where there is an etymologically essential *o* vowel in *Anatolia*, there is, in Hebrew, an *a* vowel, as represented by the א. Moreover, this Hebrew spelling, which makes use of *matres lectionis*, implies that, in the absence of such a *mater*, there is in fact no vowel. Thus, the spelling 'Anṭa'lyah proabably reflects the absence of a vowel between the *n* and the *ṭ* in the first syllable, *anṭ*. While the spelling *Natolia* is attested for Asia Minor, *Antolia* is not. See J. G. T. Grässe *et al.*, *Orbis Latinus, Lexikon lateinischer geographischer Namen des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit* (Braunschweig, 1972), vol. I, 88–9, 170.

[8] רמאדה, located near Barqah, mentioned above, T-S 13 J 20.25, line 16.

[9] Following Mann's reasonable reconstruction לעד [יחי].

21 such that[10] our brethren should fall into captivity, [which is] harsher than death, destruction or hunger?"
22 … he who smites and slaughters
24 … the voice of [the] oppressor

T-S 16.251[1]

1 In the Name of the Merciful One[2]
2 God … peace unto his people, may He spread the canopy of His peace, in which all those who seek refuge in Him will be protected.[3] On it
3 will be … all the sacrifices, and in it will be fulfilled all the blessings on our brethren, our beloved ones, the ones dear to us, and [colleagues][4]
4 of our hearts, [we long to see you] …[5] the holy congregation of those living in the land of Greece, (they are the holy congregation, the community of M[ara]thea)[6] who are dispersed in the field of the Edomites, subject
5 to the power of the enemy, handed over to the yoke of the persecutors, bearing the [brunt] of the taskmasters' staffs. May God help them and bless them.[7]
6 May He have mercy on them and shine His countenance upon them, *selah*. May He hoist a banner before the nations, to gather them in to His [i.e., their] inheritance and to His place of repose, there
7 where He yearned for it [i.e., His seat] to be,[8] with all that is written [in Scripture] for a life of joy and happiness for the redeemed ones of the Lord, as He reassured [us in Scripture:]
8 "Now, the redeemed ones of the Lord will return, and they will go to Zion in joy," etc.[9] Accept my greetings … love, joy,[10] compassion

[10] Mann reconstructs כי כן, but there is not enough space, and the simple particle ש will do.
[1] Mann, *Jews*, II, 92–3; partially trans. in Starr, *JBE*, 195.
[2] By designating this as line 1, my line numbers are out of phase with those of Mann by one line.
[3] Mann reads יחופפו, which makes sense, but which doesn't fit the characters, which should probably be read as יסוככו.
[4] Difficult reading, though possibly חבירינו.
[5] Mann speculates "and our souls, the …" which I cannot find in the letters. I speculate here, surmising ונכסף.
[6] The words in parentheses are found above the line. Mann and Starr both accepted Mastaura as the town referred to. However, Norman Golb suggested Maratheia to me, and after examing the MS, I am inclined to the reconstruction of the letters as "Marathea," as opposed to Starr's and Mann's reading, [א]ור[סט]מ/Ma[st]ur[a]. See above, chap. 3, n. 106.
[7] Mann transcribes [ישמרם]ו, "and protect them," though ויברכם is quite clear.
[8] Perhaps a reference to Ps. 132:13: אוה למושב לו, appropriately, in reference to Zion.
[9] Is. 35:10. [10] I read, רנה as opposed to Mann's [סד]ח.

9 and grace … on His people and His dwelling … [our generation] in holiness, the inheritance of
10 your forefathers … Jacob, and from the messengers of peace who are pure, mighty like … of his word, and afterwards
11 from us and from the [j]udges.[11] our colleagues, men of repute, dignitaries,[12] representatives of the congregation, and bailiffs of the [chari]ty funds
12 … on our entire community,[13] the community of No-Amon, which is the city of Alexandria in Eg[ypt] …
13 May the countenance of the Lord always shine upon you, to perpetuate and to continue His blessings upon you. May it be His will …
14 our prayer on your behalf … we have been forced, our brethren,[14] to renew …
15 on account of our brothers held captive, from among your community, on account of the hardships of the [recent] years,[15] and on account of the magnitude of the troubles and the commotion …
16 with us, and they are Eliah and Leo, the sons of … and just now[16] this Eliah, son of R …, came to us …
17 and he informed us of your kindness and your protection to …
18 this same Leo while he was with you, and he communicated our greetings …
19 … and he, with the help of Heaven will dep[art][17] …
20 they ask you, and you should be gathered together until …[18]
21 the property, and you will see her …[19]
22 until Leo comes to you …
23 His mercy …
24 "And I will plant them in th[eir land, and they will not be displaced again from their land which I gave him, said]
25 the Lord your God."[20] …
26 …
27 from the creation of the universe[21]

[11] Following Mann.
[12] וקרואי עדה, cf. Num. 26:9, "those called upon by the community."
[13] Mann reads קריונו; I read קהילינו.
[14] Mann reads הוצרכנו אחינו, which is difficult, but I cannot arrive at a better reading.
[15] Difficult reading, following Mann: מרוע השנים. [16] [ת]וכע.
[17] Following Mann; might also be "will he[lp]."
[18] This line appears to have confused or been ignored by Mann. Perhaps, "remain together," instead of "gather."
[19] I read הנכסים, hence "property"; Mann reads מוכסים, meaning "tax collectors." [20] Amos 9:15.
[21] This phrase refers to one of the traditional methods of calculating the date, indicating that the entire date was given on the previous line.

28 to include …
29 the heads …
30 …

TS 20.45[1]

This very clear letter is published almost without error by Mann and translated almost in its entirety by Starr. It poses, however, two specific textual problems of note.

The first issue deals with the reference to a fine imposed on the Rabbanites, of קרוב לאלף דינר איפרפיר, "nearly 1000 dinars, *hyperpyr*." Mann mistakenly read the word for *hyperpyr* as איפרנייר/'YPRNYYR, which he nonetheless correctly surmised to be the coin known as the *hyperpyron*. However, the perceived textual problem left doubts in the minds of other scholars, who for a variety of reasons did not want to read *hyperpyr*.[2] Below, in Appendix B, is clear evidence that the Mann's intuition is in fact borne out by the characters themselves.

The second problem is the identification of the proper noun מולפיטיאנין/MWLFYṬY'ANYN\. I read this as "Amalfitan," though no other scholar has hazarded such a guess. Another possibility is the town of Melfi, mentioned in Benjamin of Tudela, located approximately 60 miles due east of Naples.[3] However, despite the legitimate textual problems with Amalfi, it naturally comes to mind as the most prominent coastal city, whence one might expect travel to Byzantium.[4]

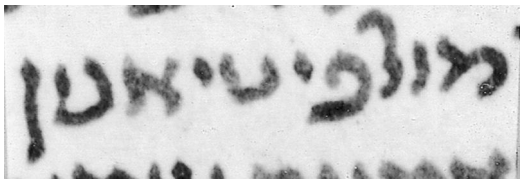
[1] Mann, *Texts*, I, 48–51; partially trans. Starr, *JBE*, 182–84; discussed by Ankori, *Karaites*, 329–30. The letter is in two pieces, which overlap in content (Mann's lines 10–15 *roughly* over lap with lines 16–20). Joshua Starr edits out the repetitive sections in his translation, whereas Mann, who could not separate the pieces out (because they were under glass), did not. Starr does not translate (according to Mann's numbering): part of line 35, the last two words of line 48–61, and the final part of the letter from part-way through line 72 to the end.

[2] The most notable alternative was presented by F. Perles, in his review of *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, by J. Mann, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 36 (1933): 537–8. He read אפרגר, for which he intended ὑπάργυρ[ος].

[3] Benjamin, *Sefer Masa'ot*, sec. 9. Should this be read as Amalfi? See cases of Hebrew root, MLF, in Gil, "Between Two Worlds," 51, n. 4. Cf. T-S 8 Ja.1.5, in which a merchant from Alexandria on his way to Amalfi suffered an attack and fled to Constantinople and Crete. Abulafia, "Il Mezzogiorno peninsulare," 13, reads Benjamin's reference as Menfi, which is a town in Sicily. All of the versions of the *Itinerary* have the MLF, as opposed to MNF, and in this section, Benjamin is not discussing Sicily but rather peninsular Italy.

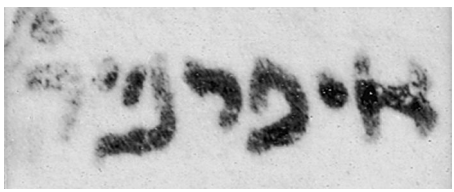
[4] For brief comments on the prominence of Amalfi, see Jacoby, "Byzantine Asia Minor," 93. For an example of an eleventh-century reference to Amalfitans without the initial *a*, see *Instituta regalia*, in MGH *Scriptores* 30/2, p. 1453, cap. 6.

Appendix B: MS images



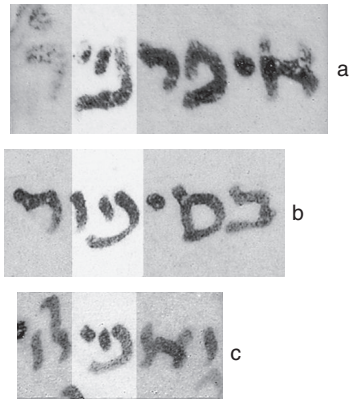
T-S 20.45 figure 1

מולפיטיאנין/mwlfyṭy'anyn. I surmise the proper adjective "Amalfitan." Despite the problem posed by the absence of an א/a at the beginning, the prominence of Amalfi, its mercantilism, and the ט/ṭ present in its adjectival form, as per Italian "Amalfitani," render it the most probable choice.



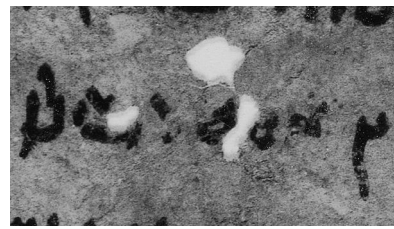
T-S 20.45 figure 2

איפרפיר/'yprpyr, read by Mann and others as איפרנייר/'yprnyyr. Mann was probably confused by the broken vertical components of the פ/p. If compared to the first פ/p in the word, the second, problematic one does indeed appear to be a ני/ny. However, the scribe in fact wrote the letter פ/p in two distinct ways, as comparison with other examples demonstrates.



T-S 20.45 figure 3

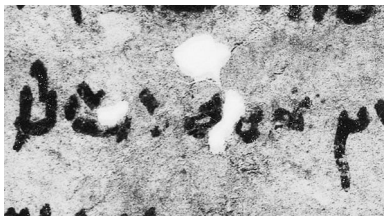
The top word is the one in question. The middle one is the common Hebrew word סיפור/*sippur*, meaning "story." The one at the bottom is the equally common Hebrew word אפילו/*'afilu*, meaning "even." All of the examples of the letter פ/p share the characteristic of the broken upper section.



T-S 13 J 34.3r figure 1

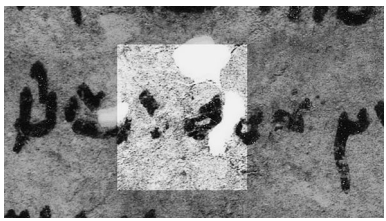
Jacob Mann read אסטרבילו, which he suspected was a Byzantine locale but could not identify. Joshua Starr (working from a photostatic copy) argued forcefully for understanding the fourth letter of this word to be a צ. He thus ended up with an unidentifiable אסטצבילו. In fact, paleographical analysis of the letters reveals that each scholar was correct in the case of one letter. The word is אסטרבילו (ʾIsṬRBYLO), from which I conclude *Strobilos*, on the southwest corner of Asia Minor and known to house a Jewish

community. Note the interpolated vowel, prior to the initial consonantal diphthong, a phonetic preference of Arabic as opposed to Greek.[1]



T-S 13 J 34.3r figure 2

This is a version of the same word, though here the background is lightened, to provide more contrast with the ink.



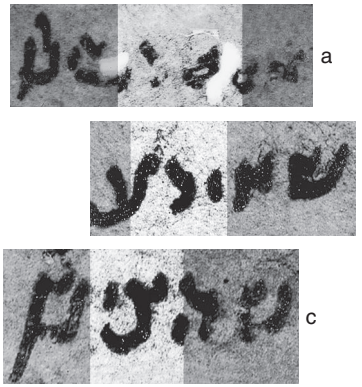
T-S 13 J 34.3r figure 3

Here, the letters ט/ṭ and ר/r are highlighted for further contrast and comparison.

T-S 13 J 34.3r figure 4

The word here is שאירע, meaning "which occurred." The two examples of the ר, here and in T-S 13 J 34.3 figure 3, share the characteristic upward tilt and short leg.

[1] Jacoby, "Byzantine Asia Minor," 90, sees ʾasṭsvilo.



T-S 13 J 34.3r figure 5

This is a comparison of the two ר/R and, at bottom, an example of צ/ṣ, showing the difficulty in Starr's reading.

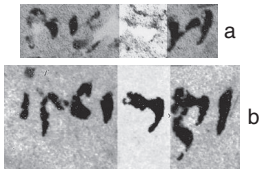
T-S 16.251 figure 1

The words תיה[ר]מ קהל/QHL M[R]TYH. I follow Norman Golb, who has convincingly argued for that interpretation, which leads to a Greek city called either Marathea or Maratheia, of which there are a number.[2] The image is unenhanced.

T-S 16.251 figure 2

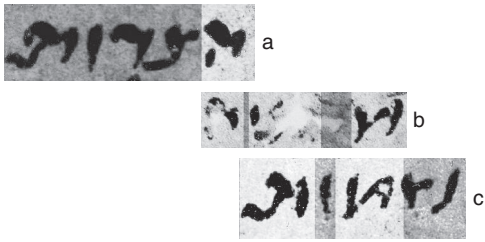
Here the background has been lightened. QHL is clear and undisputed. Joshua Starr and Jacob Mann argued for reading the difficult proper noun that follows as ורא[סט]מ/MA[SṬ]UR[A]. Their difficult reading, however, does stand up under paleographical scrutiny.

[2] N. Golb, "Some Words of Praise and a Query," *BJGS* 1 (1987): 7.



T-S 16.251 figure 3

This is a comparative reading of the most difficult letter in the word, the ר/R. The bottom word is the undisputed קרואי/QRW'Y, literally "the called ones," here meaning "the ones honored." The comparison, while instructive, is necessarily limited by the fact of a hole under the supposed ר/R. However, this image, highlighted precisely on the compared letters, faithfully renders the darker horizontal part of the letter above the hole, consistent with a ר/R.



T-S 16.251 figure 4

Here is a comparison of the less difficult letters ה/H, ת/T and מ/M. In the middle is the word in question. Above is the undisputed word הצרות/HṢRWT meaning "the troubles." The thick and upward top portion of the letter ה/H is visible in both highlighted sections, as well as the detached leg.

The bottom word is שמות/ŠMWT, meaning "names" or "reputations." The final ת/T matches that which remains of the ת/T of word in question. Noteworthy is the characteristic foot on the bottom left of the letter. The separated stroke above the foot, in the word in question, is in fact the next letter, י/Y.

The first letter of the word is accepted by all as מ/M. The comparison simply makes it very clear.

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